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POLITICIANS OF TO-DAY.

VOL. I.

a

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I Dedicate this Book

TO

J. CRICHTON BROWNE, M.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E.,

Lord Chancellor's Visitor,

IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF HIS UNFAILING
FRIENDSHIP AND SYMPATHY DURING ALL THE YEARS IN
WHICH WE HAVE KNOWN EACH OTHER.

P R E F A C E.

ALL observers of contemporary society will admit that there is a very natural, though somewhat inordinate desire on the part of those who are not actually on the scene of the political conflict, to know something more of the character of the combatants than can be learned by merely perusing the reports of their speeches. The gratification of this curiosity now forms what seems to be one of the leading departments of modern journalism. Statesmen are either 'interviewed' in their homes, or painted with pre-Raphaelite accuracy in their

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official character. We are even told what they wear, and how they look when they are uttering certain words. Nor can it be denied that the information thus conveyed to us is altogether useless. The most trivial details are interesting, if they help to bring more clearly before the mind's eye the person and the character of an eminent man.

I have not, in the following pages, sought to rival those graphic writers who have made it their business to describe for the benefit of the outer world, the clothes or the tricks of speech and gesture of living politicians. But I have endeavoured in writing these slight sketches, to bring those of whom I write somewhat more closely and clearly before the eyes of my readers, than they can be brought

through the medium of leading articles or reported speeches. In the case of Members of Parliament, I have wished to indicate to some extent the position they hold, and the reputation they enjoy in the House itself, where a standard very different from that ordinarily applied by the world at large to public persons, is not uncommonly employed. Without pretending to have gone very deep in my search for details of the lives of those of whom I have written, I may say that in the majority of cases the sketches have been seen and—so far as matters of fact are concerned have been corrected—by the subjects of them.

Originally written to supply the readers of a provincial newspaper with information which they might

have found it difficult to obtain in any other shape, there is nothing ambitious either in the object of these sketches or in the mode in which they have been executed. The reader will see that I write as a Liberal, with a firm belief in those great principles which secured to the Liberal Party its long and splendid triumph between 1832 and 1874 ; and which, I trust, it will never abandon. But whether writing of political friends or political opponents, I have endeavoured to be just to all and ungenerous to none ; and I trust that, in this matter at least, I have not been altogether unsuccessful.

LEEDS, *October 1879.*

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THE QUEEN.

VOL. I.

'76

A

[HER MAJESTY, VICTORIA ALEXANDRINA, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of its Colonies and Dependencies in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Oceania, Empress of India, Protector of the Faith, was born May 24, 1819, her father being the Duke of Kent, fourth son of George the Third, and her mother the Princess Marie Louise Victoria, daughter of the Duke of Saxe-Saalfeld-Coburg, and widow of the Prince of Leiningen. She succeeded her uncle, William the Fourth, June 20, 1837 ; was crowned June 28, 1838 ; and was married, 10th February 1840, to her cousin, François Albert Auguste Charles Emmanuel, Duke of Saxony and Prince of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. She became a widow on the 14th December 1861.]

POLITICIANS OF TO-DAY.

THE QUEEN.

THE old controversies which raged round the throne during more than one century have died out ; and the present generation at least has been spared all knowledge of those sharper and more bitter conflicts which have at times been carried on around the person of the Sovereign. We accept now with general satisfaction those monarchical institutions which have saved us from so many of the political troubles which have befallen our neighbours ; we know no pretender to the English crown ; and we have no reason to blush as we con-

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template the personal character and daily life of the Sovereign. Yet blessed as we are in all these respects, it is surprising how little knowledge there is among Englishmen generally of the true position, the real office and duties, of the Queen.

Quite recently, thanks in no small measure to Lord Beaconsfield's belief in the employment of the instinct of loyalty in order to serve party ends, new questions have been raised as to the extent and character of the royal prerogative, and we have seen Queen Victoria's conduct and position subjected to a sharp and not altogether friendly criticism by persons who fear that the Constitution is being secretly undermined by the Sovereign and her Ministers. In that controversy, some of the leading disputants have shown that they still need to be instructed as to the real position of a constitutional Monarch. I offer no apology, therefore, for making the

Queen the subject of the first of these political sketches.

Queen Victoria, I think, may be described, without any resort to the language of flattery, as the most interesting person in the British Isles, if not in the whole world. She is interesting because of her wonderful lineage, which goes back through some of the greatest as well as some of the meanest characters in history, to our English Alfred. This simple, unpretending lady, whom one meets occasionally on a summer day in Hyde Park, surrounded by little of the pomp and dignity of great rank, is the living head of a family, beside which almost all the other great houses, both royal and noble, of Europe, must count as of merely mushroom growth. For a thousand years her ancestors have been kings and queens; and during all that time, with but a few brief intervals, they have held their own on the stormy sea of his-

ents, where, under strange stars and skies, justice and order are maintained and administered in her name ; think of the lonely seas breaking against the icebergs of the poles, or lapping on the coral islets of the tropics, where her flag is borne by stately ships ; think, too, of the glorious history of that race of which she is the acknowledged leader—of its achievements on land and on the ocean, in war, and in commerce, in arts, in literature, in science, and above all, in the noble pursuit of freedom. And when you have surveyed this wondrous empire at a glance, come back to this simple woman, and reflect upon the strange destiny which has made her, since her girlhood, at once the ruler and the symbol of all this matchless heritage of power and greatness. Surely one cannot deny that in the whole world, this Queen of ours is, taken for all in all, the most interesting figure.

But there is yet one more element of interest that belongs to Queen Victoria, and that is the mystery, for it is nothing less, which envelops her office and personal life. In one sense, the Queen is the most public personage in Great Britain. The names of the guests at her dinner-table, the hours at which she goes out for a walk or a drive, the very houses which she may happen to visit, are all published to the world from day to day. There is no need to laugh at the Court Circular, though its details may seem to many persons so trivial and insignificant. The late Mr. Bagehot, who was no blind admirer of existing institutions, has remarked that this Circular is really an important factor in English society, and the very interest with which it is perused, especially by the ladies, shows that it is more powerful in its way than most persons believe it to be.

But this only gives us the outside of the Queen's life. That which we should all like to know, is the part she plays in the Constitution. All kinds of rumours are circulated about her. The popular idea among uneducated Tories is that she is a kind of autocrat, who has as much of her own way in the government of the country as the Czar has in the government of Russia. The farm labourer's boy, for example, refers everything to the Queen, and looks upon her, not merely as the fountain of honour, but as the author of the laws, the source of all authority.

The popular idea among uneducated Liberals, on the other hand, is that the Queen is a mere cipher, an ornamental figure-head to the ship, who always goes first, but who is never consulted as to the direction in which she is to move. Both of these ideas, it need hardly be said, are

nonsensical delusions, which reflect little credit upon the persons who entertain them.

Very recently a great deal of light has been thrown upon the part which the Queen plays in the Constitution, and we have seen how far she is from being an autocrat on the one hand, or a mere dummy on the other. The 'Life of the Prince Consort' shows, on the best of all evidence, that Queen Victoria takes a most active part in all political affairs, and especially in all questions of foreign policy. She reads all important despatches before they are sent off; she is kept constantly informed, not merely of what the Cabinet has done, but of what it proposes to do; and she expresses her opinions freely on all the propositions which are thus submitted to her. Some people, as we know, have been greatly shocked by this discovery, and they even

go so far as to say that it is unconstitutional for the Queen to take any part whatever in the government of the country. She is to register the decrees of the Ministry, and that is all.


Nobody who really understands the English Constitution will share this delusion ; for at no period has the Sovereign failed to assert the right to express his own opinions to his Ministers on the political questions of the day. We may go further, and say that it would be a bad day for the Constitution itself when an English Monarch accepted such a position of utter effacement as that which some writers are anxious to assign to the Queen. Even if we regard the matter in one light only, that of the unequalled personal knowledge and experience in public affairs which the Queen possesses, how great a misfortune would it be if her Ministers were absolutely

deprived of her opinions and advice. They are, in one sense, the creatures of a day. Five years is a long term of office for a Premier. The Queen has reigned for more than forty years, during the whole of which time she has been not merely the repository of all the State secrets of the British empire, but the friend and the correspondent of nearly all the crowned heads in Europe. Vast indeed must be the knowledge which she has thus accumulated.

There are sound constitutional reasons, apart from this personal experience of the Sovereign, which make it right that she should not be a mere cipher in the State ; but my space does not permit me to dwell upon them. I may appeal, however, from the new school of Constitutionalists who wish to destroy a fundamental principle of the Constitution, to a sounder authority than any one of them can claim to be, Mr.


Bagehot, who, in his work on the 'English Constitution,' lays down the doctrine that the Sovereign has 'three rights—the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to warn.'

Beyond these limits the Queen is not allowed to go. She cannot compel a Ministry to take a particular course in deference to her opinions; and if a Ministry, anxious to conciliate her, should take such a course, it cannot shelter itself behind the royal will: it must stand responsible to Parliament and the nation for that which it has done, and must abide the consequences as though its action were entirely spontaneous and voluntary. This is the true principle of a Constitutional Government. Has the Queen violated it in her public conduct at any time from the days of the battle of the bed-chamber women down to the present hour? I do not think



so ; and I am certain that no such charge has ever been proved against her.

Many bitter things have been written about the third volume of the Prince Consort's 'Life,' in which the relations of the Queen and the Cabinet are so clearly unfolded. But most of these things are as unfair as they are bitter ; and the ablest of the Queen's critics ('Verax'), in order to support his theories, finds himself compelled to saddle her with the pedantic notions of Baron Stockmar, which she probably never accepted, and which she certainly never attempted to put in practice. No ; nothing in the 'Life of the Prince Consort' shows that the Queen has gone beyond those three inalienable rights which are hers as the first and greatest of constitutional Monarchs—'the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn.' She has committed mistakes, of course. Her



opinions at times may not have been the opinions of her Ministers or of the majority of her people; but no one will deny her right to hold them; nor, within the limits laid down by Mr. Bagehot, can any one deny her the right to give free expression to them.

There is, however, another side to this question, too important to be dealt with fully in the closing sentences of this chapter. I refer to the conduct of the Minister who, knowing the real limitation of the Queen's rights under the Constitution, and fully conscious that no extension of those rights is possible, or is even contemplated by the Queen herself, yet strives to serve his own ends by skilful and elaborate attempts to drag the name and the person of the Sovereign into the arena of party strife. The conduct of such a man can only be described in two words—it is disloyal and

it is discourteous — disloyal towards the Sovereign and discourteous towards the woman. ‘Verax’ and the other writers on this subject are perfectly justified in their attacks upon the conduct of Lord Beaconsfield in his dealings with the throne ; where they err is in seeking to make the Queen personally answerable for any part of that conduct.

I have chosen to treat this special aspect of the functions and character of Queen Victoria, because it happens at this moment to be attracting not a little notice in political circles. What the Queen is as a woman need not be told. She has lived in the ‘fierce light’ of royalty for forty years, and has borne the ordeal as no other Sovereign of England ever did—as no contemporary Sovereign in Europe does, without stain as woman, wife, or mother. I believe that when the history of her

reign is at last unveiled, it will be found that she was equally without reproach as a Monarch ; and that future ages will accept her as the type and model of a Constitutional Sovereign.

THE PRINCE OF WALES.

[His Royal Highness ALBERT EDWARD, PRINCE OF WALES, Duke of Saxony, Duke of Cornwall, Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Chester, Earl of Carrick and Dublin, Baron Renfrew, and Lord of the Isles, was born November 9, 1841 ; was educated privately and at the Universities of Edinburgh, Oxford, and Cambridge. Married, March 10, 1863, the Princess Alexandra of Denmark. Visited the United States and Canada in 1860; Egypt and the Holy Land in 1862 ; and India in 1877. His Royal Highness has also been a constant visitor at most of the capitals of Europe. Gazetted to a Colonelcy in the Army in 1858, and has now attained the rank of Field Marshal.]

THE PRINCE OF WALES.



PROBABLY no position in the world is more difficult than that of the Heir to a Constitutional Monarchy. Beset by all the temptations of the highest rank, he is free from those personal responsibilities from which the heir to an absolute crown cannot escape, and which necessarily act to a certain extent as a restraint upon his actions. Our English Princes of Wales, for example, are not required to assist their parents in governing the country. They have not, like the Czarewitch, to take a leading part in deciding all grave political and national


questions ; nor are they expected, like a German Crown Prince, to take their place at the head of the army, and to show their ability as generals in the field. The Constitution does not recognise them in any capacity whatever, except that of Heirs-Apparent to the Crown. They have no settled duties to discharge ; there is no special, well-defined office which they are expected to fill. And whilst they are thus men without a work to do in life, they are exposed to all the temptations to which poor human nature is open, in their most powerful and subtle shapes. 'All the world and all the glory of it, whatever is most attractive, whatever is most seductive, has always been offered to the Prince of Wales of the day, and always will be.' I need not enlarge upon this subject ; for any of my readers who are acquainted with English history must be aware of the

kind of life which a Prince of Wales *may* lead, and of the special forms of temptation which are presented to him more frequently and more strongly perhaps than to any other man in England. It is right at the very outset to bear in mind the position which every Prince of Wales thus occupies in society, because only by doing so will it be possible to arrive at anything like a fair estimate of the conduct of any particular Prince.

The Prince of Wales who is known to the present generation labours under a special personal disadvantage, in addition to those general disadvantages of which I have just spoken. Ever since he entered upon public life on his own account, he has been overshadowed by the great reputation and unblemished life of his father. People are constantly comparing him with the late Prince Consort, and always un-

favourably ; so that he may be said, in one sense, to have suffered from the very virtues and abilities of his parent. Would it not be well for those who condemn the Prince of Wales because he does not show either the sagacity or the zealous self-consecration of Prince Albert, to remember that the latter was one of the most extraordinary men of his time ; that among Princes he stands absolutely alone ; and that even among mankind generally it would be no easy matter to discover his equal.



We do not complain because the children of men of genius who have distinguished themselves in art or literature, do not happen to display the brilliant qualities of their parents. Why, then, should we quarrel with the Prince of Wales because he is not dowered with that rare and remarkable combination of great moral and intellectual qualities which distinguished the Prince



Consort? Remember, we have no right to expect that an hereditary monarchy will give us a series of paragons or men of genius. Common sense, to say nothing of the experience of the past, shows that the contrary is more likely to be the case. If we cast our eyes over the list of English monarchs who have reigned during the last three centuries, how few men of more than average ability will be found among them. The great majority of kings are persons of small intellectual capacity, and of little self-control. Whatever may be the virtues of the hereditary system, the selection of the fittest ruler for a people is undoubtedly not one of them. If this fact is borne in mind, and if we apply to the Prince of Wales a more reasonable test than that obtained by contrasting him with his father, I do not think that we shall have much reason to complain of the result.

The Prince has undoubtedly the dis-

tion of being one of the best educated men in Europe. I do not, in speaking of education, refer to the attainment of mere scholarship, of which probably he can boast of comparatively little ; but I speak of the system under which his mind was trained in youth, and his intellectual faculties developed and improved. For this most careful training he is indebted to his father and mother, who never showed their own sound sense more conspicuously than in the instructions which they gave to the Prince's tutors. The premature death of Prince Albert brought the studies of the Heir-Apparent to a close ; but his education still went on. It had been the great desire of his father that he should enjoy the pleasure of which most Princes, and nearly all Sovereigns are deprived, that of foreign travel ; and in this matter at least the wishes of the father have been more




than gratified by the son. There is no Prince in Europe who has seen more of the world than the Prince of Wales; and whenever he comes to the throne, he will have the satisfaction of knowing that there are few corners of the British dominions, however remote they may be, with which he does not possess a personal acquaintance. Nor is it only by travel that he has expanded his mind and extended his stock of knowledge since he left college. He is blessed with a happy gift which was conspicuous in his great-uncle George the Fourth, and which was, indeed, one of the few redeeming qualities possessed by that monarch. This is the art of extracting valuable information from all those with whom he comes in contact. A graceful and pleasing talker, the Prince may be said to have cultivated the art of conversation, and in doing so, he has secured for

himself more knowledge of the world and things in general than that which is possessed by many a studious scholar. For books, I am sorry to say, he has little liking; but he does his best to make up for the deficiencies in his knowledge of literature, by his extensive acquaintance with men, with foreign countries, and with affairs.

Thus the Prince of Wales, though he cannot be said to be a paragon of merit or accomplishments, is unquestionably a man who would be recognised as possessing superior attainments, whatever his rank might be. Filling the anomalous position of which I spoke at the commencement of this article, he has shown something more than mere tact in the way in which he has avoided its difficulties. We have only, indeed, to go back to other Princes of Wales, in order to see how fortunate we are in the present possessor of the title. There have been

Heirs-Apparent who have tampered with the Constitution, and made themselves the leaders of dangerous enterprises against the liberties of the people. It has never even been pretended that the Prince of Wales has done this. There have been others who have made it the business of their lives to lead an opposition to the successive governments of their fathers. There is nothing unconstitutional in the adoption of such a course by a Prince of Wales, for the heir to the throne is not bound by the strict rules which regulate the relations of the Monarch with the Cabinet. In the present case, however, we have all seen how completely the Heir-Apparent has abstained from political intrigue of any kind. Beyond the circle of his immediate acquaintances, I do not believe there are ten men in England who know what particular political opinions the Prince holds, or what states-



men he particularly favours. Let my readers contrast this state of things with that which existed in the time of the last holder of the title, when Carlton House was the very focus of political intrigue, and when none but the men and women of a particular party were admitted within its walls !

Finally, there have been Princes of Wales whose lives have been associated with the most flagrant and outrageous scandals against public order and morality. We have no need to go back to Falstaff's 'Sweet Prince' in order to discover examples of such men. Happily, the present Prince of Wales is not one of them. I am well aware that he has not escaped the breath of calumny. No man in his position could hope to do so. His name has been bespattered with all the scandal which base, reckless, and evil-minded people could heap upon it. He may not be without fault—considering his

position, his temptations, and the frailty of human nature, it would be marvellous if he were,—but of one thing my readers may feel certain, and that is, that not one-thousandth part of the coarse and vulgar tittle-tattle retailed at his expense, has even the shadow of a foundation in fact. And whilst the Prince's life is thus free from the dark blots which have disfigured the lives of some of his predecessors, it should not be forgotten that he has not been an idle man, either in public or in private. His ambition has evidently been to play the part of an English gentleman; and I imagine there are few men in England who have filled that part more thoroughly than he has done, whether we regard him as a landlord, as the master of a great establishment, as a sportsman, or as a member of society. But in addition to this, he has shown, within certain limits, a remarkable capacity for

public work of a very useful kind. It is no flattery to say that the Paris Exhibition owed far more to him than to Marshal MacMahon, or to any of the crowned heads of Europe. He can work in his own way not merely with industry, but with enthusiasm ; and as he unites something of his father's capacity for organisation with his mother's clear-headed common sense, he is a very valuable assistant in those public enterprises in which he chooses to take part. All the more valuable is his aid, because, both in public and private, the Prince displays a remarkable tact in avoiding blunders. He may never perform any great achievement, but at least he avoids all great errors.

I have tried to show the Prince of Wales as he is, filling a most difficult and anomalous position, and upon the whole filling it exceptionally well ; not endowed with great intellectual abilities or with the

rare moral qualities of his father, but yet a man of more than average capacity and attainments, who compares favourably with any of the other Princes of Wales known to history.

What he may be as a monarch I cannot pretend to foretell; though there is little reason to suppose that he will ever overstep the narrow limits within which alone the Constitution permits the Sovereign to act. When he does come to the throne, he will have to bear the ordeal of a comparison with Queen Victoria, which in its way must be as severe as that to which he has been subjected by the virtues and genius of his father. He will have further to remember that our English loyalty, though deeply rooted in the national heart, is a sentiment founded upon personal respect and reverence. A monarch when worthless as a man or

woman, can never again reign in England. The standard of fitness has changed in many things during the past fifty years; but in nothing has it changed more completely than in our estimate of the duties and character of the Sovereign. This fact the Prince of Wales must bear in mind, if he desires to hand down to his children unstained and unimpaired that splendid inheritance which at some future day will devolve upon him.

LORD BEACONSFIELD.

[THE Right Honourable BENJAMIN DISRAELI, EARL OF BEACONSFIELD, K.G., P.C., D.C.L., LL.D., etc., is the eldest son of Isaac Disraeli, of Bradenham Manor, Bucks, author of the 'Curiosities of Literature,' etc. Lord Beaconsfield's family, which is a Hebrew one of great antiquity, settled in England in the middle of the last century. Before attaining his majority, Lord Beaconsfield had made himself known as an author. His first romance, 'Vivian Grey,' was published when he was in his twenty-first year, and met with a marked success. It was followed by a series of brilliant novels, in which political and social topics were handled with great power and originality, and in which many of the leading personages of the day were introduced under thinly-veiled disguises. After spending some time in Eastern travel, Mr. Disraeli entered the House of Commons in 1837, as member for Maidstone. In 1841, he left that borough and became the representative of Shrewsbury. Speedily attaining Parliamentary rank, by means of his very clever and bitter criticisms on the policy of Sir Robert Peel, he was recognised as one of the leaders of the Protectionist Party, after that statesman had adopted Free Trade. In 1847, Mr. Disraeli became member for Buckinghamshire. In 1852, having become leader of the Tory Party in the House of Commons, he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Derby's first administration. This office he twice subsequently held in the Governments of the same statesman; and on Lord Derby's retirement from office in 1868, he was appointed First Lord of the Treasury. Having resigned this post after the general election in the December following, he remained in opposition till February 1874, when he once more became Prime Minister, with a large majority at his back. In 1876, he was created Earl of Beaconsfield and Viscount Hughenden. In 1878, after his return from the Berlin Congress, where he had acted as first Plenipotentiary of Great Britain, he received the Garter from her Majesty. Lord Beaconsfield was born December 21, 1804. He married, 1839, the widow of the late Mr. Wyndham Lewis, M.P. That lady was created Viscountess Beaconsfield in November 1868, and died December 1872.]

LORD BEACONSFIELD.



‘**H**E must be a mighty impartial person,’ said that indefatigable gossip and scandal - monger, Mr. Charles Greville, when writing some forty years ago of the man who is now Prime Minister of England. ‘Mighty impartial’ was indeed a mild term in which to describe a politician who, on looking for a seat in Parliament, was uncertain as to whether he would accept the patronage of Lord Durham or of the Marquis of Chandos. But perhaps no better word than ‘impartiality’ could be found to describe that peculiar

quality of the Disraelian mind and character, which in the case of any other man would probably be called want of principle. Lord Beaconsfield is not unprincipled ; he is not even inconsistent. Throughout his public career he has been true to himself, and to certain fantastic political theories with which he set forth fully equipped for the voyage of life, nearly half-a-century ago. It so happens, however, that neither he nor his theories—or principles, if you will—have anything in common with the political institutions and creeds of the United Kingdom. He himself is as much an ‘outsider’ in our social and public affairs, as the ingenious gentleman, who in Lord Lytton’s ‘Coming Race’ is the first of mankind to become acquainted with the *Vrilja*, must have been in the subterranean sphere to which he was conducted in the romance. As for his theories,

which you find in his novels, in his poems, and occasionally even in his speeches, they have as little to do with the every-day life of the English people, as the mysteries taught by Joanna Southcote have to do with the Thirty-nine Articles. A stranger and a sojourner in this land of his birth and his adoption, this Egypt of which he has taken possession in the name of his brethren of Judæa, he does not deserve to be called unprincipled, merely because he hesitates constantly between the opposing creeds of the two political parties. He is simply impartial.

Why should we waste so much fine moral indignation over Lord Beaconsfield's supposed delinquencies, seeing that they are as much hereditary qualities, for which he cannot be held personally responsible, as are the 'flat-noses' of those Franks whom he holds up to ridicule in his romances?

We might as well be angry with a Mohawk Indian, because he cannot appreciate Kant's philosophical writings ; or with a Turk, because he does not understand the freedom accorded to English wives and daughters. What Lord Beaconsfield is, he must have been, whatever might have been his political education or his ostensible political faith. The instincts of his race are strong upon him ; and though baptised into the Christian Church, he will be known in the page of history as the greatest of those Jew statesmen who have from time to time hired themselves out in the service of their Egyptian task-masters.

Far be it from me to make this statement in any spirit of vulgar intolerance. Lord Beaconsfield belongs to a noble race, which has shown itself to be abundantly gifted with some of the finest characteristics, both mental and moral, which can belong to civilised

mankind. One of his own best characteristics is the honest pride he has always shown in his birth and ancestry. It is not, therefore, as a reproach that I speak of him as essentially a Jew ; but it is because this fact must be borne in mind by those who wish to arrive at a right understanding of his character and career. He has 'the faults of his quality' in a very pronounced degree, and we can only find the true explanation of many of his most remarkable actions, by bearing this circumstance in mind.

Coming into the middle of English public life as a stranger and an outsider, and, to use the word in its least offensive form, as an adventurer to boot, he viewed our national peculiarities and prejudices, our forms of party faith and political traditions, with an eye of perfect impartiality. The impartiality, as we know by his own ad-

mission, was mingled with contempt. What right had these boorish islanders, with their political history of a bare thousand years, to lay claim to be the supreme source and fountain of political wisdom and enlightenment? What were the mushroom creeds of Puritans and Cavaliers, of Whigs and Tories, when set by the side of the splendid traditions of a race which was the greatest in the world when England was yet the haunt of wild beasts and the home of naked savages?

Lord Beaconsfield has not even pretended to conceal the spirit in which he thus views us. The result is, that from his standpoint there has always been little to choose between the tweedle-dum of Toryism and the tweedle-dee of Whiggery. He hesitated at the outset of his career as to which of the two parties should enjoy the benefit of his genius, and should be made to serve

his purposes. He coquetted with the Whig Lord Durham, with the Tory Lord Chandos, with the Radical Mr. Hume ; and it was more owing to the chapter of accidents than to anything else, that he finally cast in his lot with the party of which he is now the most illustrious member.

How he served that party during many long and painful years, it is not my purpose to relate here. Like most of his race, he showed himself thoroughly loyal—loyal and true to those with whom his fortunes were identified. Accordingly he did their bidding, he served their interests, with a devotion which knew no limits—not even the limits of honour and self-respect. When some one was wanted to plant the poisoned dagger in the heart of Peel, it was Disraeli who was employed to do the assassin's work. When, again, it was necessary that

the principles which had guided the party for centuries should be flung overboard, and Conservatism should make itself the open patron and ally of the democracy, it was Disraeli who led the way in that world-famous 'leap in the dark.' Do not let us blame him because he thus put out his splendid intellect, his wit, his eloquence, his unrivalled powers of sarcasm, to hire. In doing so he merely followed out the practice of his race; and it is only right to say, that if his political career had ended in 1868, though his life would have been marred by many notable blemishes, there is hardly one among us who would not have been ready to admit that it was, upon the whole, a creditable, and even illustrious career, and that Benjamin Disraeli, the Hebrew leader of the Tory party, had been singularly fortunate in displaying some of the best qualities of his people,

whilst holding in abeyance their more characteristic defects.

That, however, is not the verdict that can now be pronounced upon Lord Beaconsfield. Fortune has made him, in the closing years of his life, the most powerful English Minister of this generation. It has given him, for a season, absolute command of both Houses of Parliament. All the resources of the greatest empire in the world, its unsurpassed material strength, its traditions—which, to the European at least, are hardly second to those of any other of the races of mankind,—its very institutions, the slow growth of centuries of pain and travail, have all been placed at his disposal; and, like many another man, he has failed to stand the test to which he has thus been subjected. No one looking back can doubt that, from the year 1874, or, to speak with literal accuracy, from 1875, there has

been a distinct change in the attitude of Lord Beaconsfield, both towards the party with which he has associated himself, and towards the people of whom, alien though he be, he must be counted as one. Race has triumphed over self-restraint, and at last Lord Beaconsfield stands confessed the full inheritor of the defects as well as of the qualities of his nation.

How has this new development of his character been exhibited? In one word, by his resolute determination to play the part of a Grand Vizier. Strange, indeed, but not more strange than true, is it, that an English Prime Minister who sat during the lifetime of a generation in the House of Commons, and who fairly won his place among the nobles of England, should have committed himself to the hopeless task of converting his great office into an imitation of that held by the servant and minister of

some Oriental ruler. But, looking back over these four years, the conclusion that it is so becomes irresistible.

We have seen Lord Beaconsfield playing with the House of Commons as Grand Viziers played with the mob of Bagdad or Constantinople in former days,—treating it to alternate doses of sweet-meats and drugs; now exhibiting a studied contempt for its rights, and now overwhelming it with laboured compliments. We have seen also how he has treated his own colleagues,—complaisantly so long as they served his purpose, cavalierly when they stood in his way; dismissing even those to whom he was most deeply indebted for his own advancement with the unhesitating alacrity with which the Oriental potentate orders the bow-string to be used upon his quondam favourite, when he has grown tired of him. Finally, we have seen the slavish

adulation he has reserved for the Sovereign. Nothing can be more truly Semitic in its character than the instinct which leads Lord Beaconsfield to treat the Queen with that humble and almost abject deference which, during the present century at least, no other English Minister has shown towards the occupant of the throne. If he only understood our English spirit, if he had even a glimmering of the truth concerning our Constitution, he would know that he could do the Queen no greater disservice than by that cringing reverence, that obsequious self-abasement before the throne, which has the effect of setting the Sovereign, however unwilling she herself may be, in a position which no constitutional Monarch can safely occupy.

The foreign policy of Lord Beaconsfield may also be said to betray the defects of his race. It is grandiose rather than grand ;

whilst it possesses the great fault of a want of moral backbone. His imagination being far more vivid than that of Mr Gladstone, and his temperament having a catholicity—if I may use such a word in this connection—which few Englishmen attain to, he has not seldom seen more clearly and correctly than his great rival has done. And if a sound foreign policy could be devised with an entire disregard of moral principles and English sympathies, or, as Lord Beaconsfield would describe them, English prejudices, I am inclined to think that he would be quite as safe a guide in such affairs as any other living statesman. Unfortunately his weakness for what he himself has called the ‘sustained splendour of a stately life,’ his passion for histrionic triumphs, his reverence for dignities, his tribal sympathies and antipathies, and above all, his complete freedom from the

control of great moral principles, combine to make him, in spite of his shrewdness, his sagacity, and his clearness of vision, one of the worst of all executive statesmen. It is not under his guidance that the nation can ever hope to reach the Promised Land; nor is it to a man of his type that the destinies of England ought ever to be entrusted.

He has not deserved the unqualified abuse which has been showered upon him of late by many Liberal speakers and writers; and the foolish persons who have held him up to indignation as 'a fearful Mephistopheles,' have shown a singular inaptness in their criticisms of his character. The foundations of that character are self-seeking and 'impartiality.' How he accomplishes his own purposes is a matter of comparative indifference to him, provided that he does accomplish them. Politics are to him a game in which the rules are not

very strictly defined, and in which a large latitude is enjoyed by the player who is not particularly scrupulous as to the way in which he plays. Thus, in his public character he has often stood convicted of conduct which, outside the domain of politics, would be justly regarded as disgraceful ; yet in his private career he has shown himself eminently reputable and worthy. Just so the Grand Vizier of the story rebukes his daughter for telling an untruth, whilst he himself invents an accusation against his enemy which costs the latter his life.

If I had simply to write of Lord Beaconsfield as an author, a man of genius, a member of society, it would be difficult to speak too warmly in his praise, and his wonderful career might be commended to the admiration and imitation of young men everywhere. But it is impossible to dissociate the private individual from the

public character, the man from the Minister ; and when we regard Lord Beaconsfield as a statesman, there is only one conclusion to which we can come. That is, that by birth, by training, by temperament, and by the strong bent of his own inclination, he is absolutely unfitted for the position which he now occupies at the head of the British Empire. He would have been an admirable Grand Vizier to the Good Haroun Alraschid ; he would have been an excellent courtier in the train of *le Grand Monarque* ; he might even have made a fair Prime Minister in the reign of Queen Anne ; but in the days of Victoria, and as the leading member of a Parliamentary Government, he is, in spite of all his accomplishments and his talents, an anachronism of which it is our duty to get rid at the earliest possible moment.

M. GAMBETTA.

[LÉON GAMBETTA was born at Cahors, in 1838. Became a member of the Paris Bar in 1859. Was returned to the Corps Legislatif in 1869 as member for Paris and Marseilles, and took a prominent part among the opponents of the Empire. On the fall of the Empire, became Minister of the Interior in the Government of September 4th, 1870 ; and acted as virtual Dictator of France during the siege of Paris. Resigned on February 6th, 1871. Was returned to the National Assembly in the same month, and became the prominent leader of the Republican party. In 1879, appointed President of the Chamber of Deputies.]

M. GAMBETTA.



I OFFER no apology for asking my readers to turn aside from English political personages in order to study the character and the career of M. Gambetta. There is nobody like him in Europe. Other men have risen as high, and from almost as low a starting-point, but none of them have risen with such dazzling suddenness ; and none, I believe, have borne their marvellous elevation so wisely, so steadfastly, or so modestly as he has done. The career of Lord Beaconsfield in its personal aspect may be likened to a three-

volume novel. It is very wonderful, very picturesque ; but it extends over a great space of time, so that it is difficult to take in its many surprising details at a glance. The career of M. Gambetta, on the other hand, is like a drama in a single act. It covers, as biographers reckon, only a few months, or at most a few years, and the youngest politician of the day must be able to go back to its commencement without straining his memory.

It was in the year 1865 that Léon Gambetta, a young barrister, who had been born of humble parentage at Cahors, in the south of France, first began life in Paris. He had little to do, and he had neither money nor influential friends. So he was forced to dress shabbily and to live cheaply. But he had two qualifications for succeeding in the vocation he had chosen. One was an unbounded confidence in himself, and

the other was a voice of marvellous range and power. I have heard the voices of many great orators in my time. I have often listened to Bright, before he betrayed that huskiness of tone which now distresses him whenever he speaks. Many a time I have sat entranced whilst the mellow, rounded, and most melodious tones of Gladstone have rung clear and high above the din of stormy factions in the House of Commons. I have heard Spurgeon at his best, letting every man in his vast Tabernacle hear each syllable as it fell from his lips. I remember, too, the mellifluous tones of Wilberforce; and I am familiar with the silken accents of Coleridge. But never have I heard speech like that of M. Gambetta's—never have I heard a voice of such compass, emphasis, flexibility, and power.

It is not surprising, then, to learn that

Gambetta had hardly taken up his residence in Paris, and had scarcely begun to frequent that Café Procope, which was then the chosen resort of the briefless young barristers of the Republican party, before he began to attract attention in virtue of this wonderful voice of his, which was heard in its deep, sonorous, and yet melodious accents, denouncing the Empire and its abuses through every corner of the famous coffee-house. A voice and nothing else would not, of course, have sufficed to give Gambetta fame, though now-a-days the public man who is not gifted with a good voice must make a hard fight if he wishes to succeed in life. Gambetta had brains in addition to his vocal endowments, however, and after three years of weary waiting in the antechambers of the law courts, he got the chance of proving of what stuff he was made. He was retained to defend a Radical

newspaper which had been prosecuted by the Empire for the heinous crime of offering to receive subscriptions for the erection of a monument to M. Baudin, a Deputy who had been murdered on the barricades at the time of the *coup d'état*. M. Gambetta performed his task in a wonderful way. It was his first appearance in any important case. Most other men would probably have been nervous and ill at ease at finding themselves called upon to plead in such a cause before the notorious Judge Delesvaux. Gambetta, however, was in his element. Making use of that wonderful voice of his, which resisted all the attempts of the Judge to silence him by interruptions and brow-beating, this young provincial barrister delivered a great political harangue, which was nothing less than an impeachment of Napoleon the Third and the Second Empire. Its eloquence was equalled by its

courage, as my readers must admit when I say that it described—in those days of Imperial tyranny and proscription—the Emperor as a highwayman who had stunned France by a sudden and treacherous blow.

Such a speech, so fresh, so bold, so full of fine passages of sentiment and declamation, fell like dew upon the parched hearts of the French people. Within four-and-twenty hours our young barrister was famous from Calais to Marseilles, and within a year he was the leading member of the small Republican Opposition on the benches of the Corps Legislatif.

In this brief bird's-eye view of his career, I can only notice its most important incidents—but what incidents those are! When 1870 came, and the Second Empire had been hustled out of France amid the curses of the nation it had ruined, M. Gambetta, who two years before had been

utterly obscure, vaulted at once to the height of power. Nobody can have forgotten how, having been made a member of the Provisional Government of September 4th, he speedily eclipsed all his colleagues, and became the leading spirit of France during the eventful days of the Great War. His escape from Paris in a balloon ; his establishment of himself at Tours as virtual Dictator ; and his organisation of that grand resistance of the nation to the invader, which, if it did not save the territory, undoubtedly did save the honour of France, must be fresh in the recollection of all my readers.

Of course he committed innumerable errors at this time, and equally of course, every one of the worthy people who sat at home in their arm-chairs and criticised his actions, would have gone through the same crisis without falling into a single blunder ! But let those who have been hardest upon him

for what he then did, when he alone of all Frenchmen seemed to have the courage and the capacity of leadership which his unhappy country needed, remember two points, in connection with this astounding episode in his career.

The first is, that after enjoying absolute command of the revenues of the richest country on the Continent, at a time when no nice system of account-keeping was possible, he retired into private life in 1871 as poor as he had ever been. The second is, that the Crown Prince of Germany, who is, perhaps, a tolerably competent authority on the subject, has declared that Gambetta in less than six months, without assistants or armies, did what Count von Moltke, with the whole of the splendid organisation at his disposal, could not have accomplished in a year. No doubt it was astounding impudence for an upstart barrister of two-

and-thirty to rush to the helm, when, according to all the laws of decency, the vessel should have been left—in the absence of any pilot of recognised rank and dignity—to drift helplessly to utter shipwreck ; but it was impudence which has made France for all time the debtor of this young man.

If M. Gambetta's career had ended then, he would still have been one of the most striking figures in history, but the world would have appreciated his real character very imperfectly. Enormous as were his services to France in 1870, they have been completely eclipsed by those which he has rendered to her since. It was his reconciliation with M. Thiers, his frank and full acceptance of the veteran statesman as his leader, which alone made the Republic possible in France ; and it is his conversion to the idea of a Conservative Republic

that has given the present institutions of the country a fair prospect of permanence.

From 1871, after he descended from the throne of the Dictatorship, down to May 16th, 1877, M. Gambetta, though he took an active part in the debates in the Chamber, and made many brilliant and powerful speeches, chiefly against the Bonapartists and the Clericals, did not hold a particularly prominent place in public life. His work at this time was behind the scenes, where he was consolidating the various sections of the Republican party, winning the confidence of those who had formerly believed him to be 'a raving madman' or a mountebank, and restraining those impetuous Radicals who were constantly threatening to upset the coach of the Constitution. During that time his friends saw with delight how his character grew and improved. The extravagances of his early career, due in no

small measure to the hot Southern blood which courses in his veins, became less and less conspicuous ; and his repentance after his temporary fits of indiscretion became more speedy than before. Moreover he started a newspaper, *La République Française*, and thus obtained a source of income which enabled him, for the first time in his life, to hire a carriage, to entertain his political associates in something better than the Bohemian fashion of his youth, and to maintain the kind of establishment which even the simple-minded French consider that a great political leader is bound to keep up. How long he might have gone on in this comparatively quiet and uneventful fashion, if no 16th of May had come, it is impossible to say ; but the abortive *coup d'état* of that date once more roused him to action.

During the prolonged struggle between the nation and the reactionary conspirators

who had MacMahon as their titular chief and de Broglie as their prime mover, the burden and heat of the battle rested upon the shoulders of Gambetta ; and after the sudden death of the illustrious Thiers, he may be said to have waged the combat almost single-handed. I look upon this period as the most brilliant in his whole career. Not even when he was organising armies out of nothing at Tours, did he show more courage and capacity than when in 1877 he met de Broglie, de Fourtou, and the whole mob of traitors and conspirators who had seized the reins of power, and conquered them by sheer dint of eloquence, honesty, and patriotism. Nobody who recalled the episode of the Baudin defence was surprised when Gambetta defied MacMahon as openly and boldly as he had defied MacMahon's master in 1869. 'He must submit or he must resign,' was

the formula which he preached through the length and breadth of France during that most exciting contest; and for saying it he was dragged before a police magistrate, and sentenced to fine and imprisonment! He has had his revenge. The great battle issued not only in his triumph, but in the most complete submission, and eventually in the resignation, of Marshal MacMahon; and since December 1877, it is in the hands of Gambetta that the real reins of power in France have rested. The recent Senatorial elections show that France dreads him no longer. Those elections are, indeed, the sign and seal of his complete ascendancy over the nation.

Unquestionably ambitious—what man who was not ambitious could have done so much in these ten short years?—M. Gambetta probably aspires to the Presidential chair. His friends declare, however, that he will

not take office until the questions of secular education and of Church and State have been finally settled. He will remain outside the Government until those problems are disposed of ; contenting himself with the easy and dignified post which he now holds, and which it is safe to regard as being only a stepping-stone to the Presidency itself. A few years ago the idea of Gambetta, the original of Rabagas, in the Presidential chair, would have sent a thrill of horror throughout Europe. It does so no longer, however. Frenchmen have learned that he is no wild revolutionary, but a practical and sagacious statesman, who, in spite of the defects of his early training and character, has shown himself commendably alive to the necessity of practising compromise, and of pursuing conciliation, as the great methods of success in politics.

Abroad he has ceased to inspire the fears

once excited by the mention of his name, and even Prince Bismarck has been heard to speak well of him. But though all his prospects thus seem bright, he has one great enemy to cope with—his own personal weakness. Though one of the tallest and stoutest men to be seen in the streets of Paris, he is far from strong, and it has become absolutely necessary for him to lead a very abstemious and careful life, in order that his strength may be husbanded for the work he has still to do. His weakness, however, is never apparent when he stands in the tribune, pouring out one of those impassioned harangues,—glowing with colour and sentiment, and enriched with the sarcasm, the invective, and the scorn of which he is so perfect a master,—by which he has made himself the terror of all the enemies of the Republic. To watch him, to listen to him then, is to enjoy an intel-

lectual treat, the memory of which can never fade away ; and it is further to satisfy yourself that even if M. Gambetta's lot had not been cast in those stormy days which have furnished such opportunities for the display of his rare and splendid abilities, he must still have secured for himself a place among the historic masters of French oratory.

MR. GLADSTONE.

[The Right Hon. WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE is the fourth son of Sir John Gladstone, a merchant of Liverpool, and is of Scotch extraction. He was born at Liverpool, 1809 ; married, 1839, Catherine, daughter of Sir Stephen Richard Glynne, Bart., of Hawarden Castle, Flintshire. Educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he obtained a 'double first' in 1831. Entered Parliament as member for Newark in 1832, which he continued to represent till 1847, when he was returned for the University of Oxford. Represented the University till July 1865, when he was elected for South-West Lancashire. Defeated at the General Election in 1868, but returned by the borough of Greenwich. In 1834 Mr. Gladstone was appointed a Junior Lord of the Treasury. From January till April 1835 was Under-Secretary for the Colonies. In September 1841 became Vice-President of the Board of Trade and Master of the Mint ; resigned these offices in February 1845 ; was Secretary of State for the Colonies from December 1845 till July 1846 ; Chancellor of the Exchequer from December 1852 till February 1855, and from June 1859 till July 1866. In November 1858 was sent as Lord High Commissioner Extraordinary to the Ionian Islands. In December 1868 he became First Lord of the Treasury, and held that office till February 1874. Mr. Gladstone is the author of numerous works, chiefly on ecclesiastical and classical subjects, and of late years has been a frequent contributor to the leading periodicals of the day.]


MR. GLADSTONE.

ONE day in the year 1839 a party of guests were assembled at Sir Robert Peel's house at Drayton Manor, when a servant brought into the room a new book which had just been received. The great statesman took it up, turned over its pages for a few moments with a somewhat contemptuous air, and then flung it into the fire, saying as he did so, 'Confound that young fellow ; if he goes on writing stuff of this sort he'll ruin his future. Why can't he stick to politics ?' The book in question was called 'The State considered in its

Relations with the Church,' and the 'young fellow' who roused the irritation of Sir Robert Peel, was the eminent man whose name I have placed at the head of this chapter.

This little anecdote, which I repeat on the authority of an eye-witness of the scene, is worth recalling, because it shows that just forty years ago Mr. Gladstone's illustrious political friend and patron was making the same complaint regarding him as that which one hears to-day from many of his professed admirers. The great charge now brought against the man who is, by universal confession, the ablest of living English statesmen, is that he will *not* stick to the prescribed routine of his position.

When he was a youth, just beginning public life, and with a hard battle for recognition before him, he annoyed his friends and patrons by not applying himself solely to the duties which custom imposes upon




the sucking statesman. He wrote books, and serious books too, on grave constitutional problems, at a time when he ought to have been content to 'hold his tongue and cheer his leader' from a modest place on the back benches.

And now, when a great life is mellowing and ripening in the autumn sunshine—a sunshine not unchequered by clouds and storms—Mr. Gladstone puzzles and irritates the world by his resolute refusal to accept the place assigned from time immemorial to the retired statesman or party leader.

- He ought, says the world, speaking after its own fashion, to be satisfied with what he has done, and to leave the field in the occupation of younger men. Instead of taking this course, however, he is more active in his retirement than any office-holder or office-seeker among his contemporaries. He fills up the mere leisure

moments of his life by a voluminous correspondence, so varied and extensive, that it alone would tax the energies of an ordinary man; he finds time to study his favourite subjects, which lie far apart from the current of politics, and to keep himself abreast of the general culture of the day; he is a constant contributor to some of the leading reviews and magazines; he is ready when required to give an address on Thrift or a lecture on Dean Hook to his neighbours at Hawarden; but over and above all this, he is at the same time the ablest, the most searching, and the most powerful critic of the intricate and complicated foreign policy of the Government, and the foremost champion, recognised as such by all the world, of some of the cardinal principles of Justice and Freedom.

A man who through all his life has been distinguished by these characteristics is



hardly to be tried by ordinary standards. As a matter of fact, it would be all but impossible to discover a standard applicable to Mr. Gladstone. Who is there among his contemporaries who can be likened to him? The mere politicians of the day, it need hardly be said, shrivel into pigmies when set beside him. Even Lord Beaconsfield, with all his brilliant talents, and his glittering successes, shows poorly when contrasted with the stronger if somewhat homelier stuff of which the man whom the irony of history has made his rival is composed.

Outside the domain of politics—in literature, in science, at the bar, in medicine, or on the press—we see occasional instances of men of rare and splendid abilities, even instances of men who have something of Mr. Gladstone's many-sidedness. But who can truly be placed on a level with him among the men of this generation? Let

my readers run over in their minds the names of their favourite heroes, and then say whether they can find any one who will really bear comparison with the man whose extraordinary personality must be accounted one of the greatest factors in recent English history. Thus having really no one with whom to compare him—and I cannot find among the statesmen of the past the true prototype of Mr. Gladstone—I am compelled to consider him simply as he is, and I shall endeavour to convey to my readers, as briefly as possible, some idea of his characteristics and his achievements.

The key to Mr. Gladstone's character may be summed up in a single phrase. It is loyalty to conscience. Other men there doubtless, are among this generation of politicians, who have the same reverence for the dictates of conscience as that which distinguishes him; but none among them has

been placed in positions where this loyalty was so difficult to maintain as it has been in the career of Mr. Gladstone. For he has not been a mere orator, or writer, or public man, in the wider acceptance of the term. He has been one of the foremost executive statesmen of the day, constantly engaged in the conduct of the national affairs, constantly involved in the thousand and one intrigues which are necessarily connected with party life in a country like England. Difficult as it is for any man to retain his reverence for the kingship of conscience, how transcendently difficult must it be for a man who has done the work and filled the place of Mr. Gladstone to do so !

The old simile of the camel and the needle's eye involuntarily occurs to the mind as one thinks of a Prime Minister, and a great party leader, who has been resolved through all his life to be loyal and true

to the biddings of his own conscience. Yet that this has been the resolve of Mr. Gladstone, and that he has happily been able to carry it into effect, is proved by the whole history of his life. We see it in that earliest 'indiscretion' of which I have spoken, the publication of his book on 'Church and State.' We see it again in his dealings with the Maynooth Grant, in his apparently tortuous but really most simple and sincere line of action during the Crimean War, and in his more recent proceedings in connection with the Eastern Question. Men constantly tell us of his 'impracticableness,' his irritability, his arrogance, his waywardness. There is no end, in short, to the catalogue of his vices as it is recited by some people. But if the matter is searched to the bottom, it will be found, I believe, that in nearly every case the defects in Mr. Gladstone's manner, and the

apparent imperfections in his policy, are to be attributed to this rare and splendid devotion to conscience which lies at the root of his character. Of him, at least, even more emphatically than of the Duke of Wellington, may it be said, that he

‘ Never sold the truth to serve the hour ;
Nor paltered with eternal God for power.’

Whether right or wrong, whether wise or impolitic, it is quite certain that every action of his public life has been dictated by an overwhelming sense of duty, a constraining belief in the righteousness of that which he did. Other men have one standard of morality for their private and another for their public life. There are statesmen who, in all that concerns their family and their friends, are strictly honourable and high-minded ; but who, in the affairs of their party, never stick at a manœuvre or a trick

to which they would blush to stoop in any private or personal matter. Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons is as strict in his rule of life as Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden Castle. Both as a man and a politician, a great and abiding reverence for conscience is his distinguishing characteristic.

Next to this characteristic, I should place his passionate devotion to the cause of human freedom. It seems not a little curious that one who began life as 'the rising hope of the stern and unbending Tories,' and who was for many years in close alliance with Conservative statesmen, should have been distinguished from his earliest years by this passion for freedom. Nobody, however, who looks back over his career, can doubt the existence of this anomaly; and I believe that it is to this instinctive affection for liberty that we owe his entrance into the ranks of the Liberal party.

It has been amusing of late to observe how ignorant and foolish persons have reviled Mr. Gladstone for his 'newly-awakened' zeal on behalf of the victims of oppression and misrule. Newly-awakened, forsooth! Are those who use this language ignorant of the fact that the solitary occasion on which Mr. Gladstone did violence to his fiscal principles, was when he proposed that sugar grown by free labour should be treated more favourably than the sugar produced by slaves? Have they forgotten the letters to Lord Aberdeen, which thrilled all Europe by their splendid exposure and denunciation of the iniquities of the Neapolitan Government, and carried the first rays of hope and consolation into the dungeons of Poerio and his fellow-captives? Do they ignore the great speech on Mr. Baines' Reform Bill of 1864, which by its vindication of the common humanity of the working

classes, carried the reform question out of the region of sterile debate into that of practical politics ?

No one who remembers these incidents in Mr. Gladstone's career (and many similar ones could be named if necessary), can have been surprised at that outburst of noble indignation, that revolt against infamous wrong-doing, which placed him in a moment at the head of the anti-Turkish movement in 1876. 'It is just what might have been expected from Gladstone,' said one who knew him well, at the time when his pamphlet on the Bulgarian horrors fired the sympathies of the English people ; and he spoke the simple truth. At all times Mr. Gladstone may be expected to forget conventional laws, to cast aside conventional restraints, to place party or even national interests in a secondary place, when he is called to action by the voice of duty, when

he is summoned to lend his aid to a great work of liberation.

Two other features of his character remain for notice. The first is his ardent sympathy with the commercial classes. I suppose he inherits this from his Scottish ancestors; at any rate, his keen delight in commercial questions, his shrewdness in understanding wherein the real interests of this great trading community may be found, bear a strong family likeness to some distinctive Scotch peculiarities of character. But wherever this trait may come from, the fact of its existence is not to be denied. Mr. Gladstone is without exception the best commercial minister England has ever had. His sympathy with all efforts for the extension of our national industries and commerce has been shown in a thousand practical ways. Lord Beaconsfield has posed at various interesting epochs in his life as

the friend of the 'harassed' mercantile interests of Great Britain; but he has never raised a finger to secure new markets for us, or to remove the chains by which our commerce has been burdened. Mr. Gladstone, on the other hand, though he has never set himself forward as the patron of a class, has done more than any other man—more even than Peel himself—to free commerce from the bonds imposed upon it by our ancestors, and to

‘Let the fair white-winged Peacemaker fly
To happy havens under all the sky.’

The other noticeable trait in his character of which I must say something is his earnestness. Here it must be said we find that which is a source of weakness as well as of strength. It is a source of weakness, because when Mr. Gladstone has once devoted himself to any great work, it seems, as it were, to take possession of him, and

to carry him forward with an impetuosity which does not always take sufficient account of the obstacles which lie in his path. This is the great cause of his offending many good men and true, who would perhaps like to go with him, but who find themselves unable to advance as fast as he does, and who somewhat unwarrantably resent his superior speed. Moreover, this enthusiasm of his being very infectious, it is often caught by men who, having nothing of his solid weight of discretion and sagacity, are hurried into ridiculous excesses into which he himself would never fall.

This has been painfully apparent in the controversies on the Eastern Question, in which we have seen numberless attempts made to saddle Mr. Gladstone with the responsibility for extravagant and mischievous speeches which never fell from his lips, but which were the rash utterances of indiscreet

imitators and admirers. Yet whilst it is right to point to this unquestionable drawback, it must not be forgotten that his earnestness, his noble enthusiasm in any great cause to which he consecrates himself, is an element of immense value in his character. We live in days when earnest men are too much at a discount, and when the clever, shrewd, facile, dilettante statesman is the model most generally admired. It is a great thing in these circumstances that we should have among us one whose heart has not been dried up by that withering east wind of cynicism, which is the curse of modern society. It is a great thing that the foremost of our public men should be a man who is not afraid to add to the opinions he utters all the strength that comes from intense personal conviction; who does not fear to bring heart and brain into closest sympathy and alliance, and who

can give not a mere corner of his mind, but all the heat and force of his whole moral and intellectual being, to the service of the cause which he has espoused.

It would be an easy matter to give my readers a 'graphic' picture of Mr Gladstone; to describe some of the peculiarities of his manner, some of the features of his daily life; to dwell upon his dazzling qualities as a debater, upon his unrivalled powers of exposition. But I have preferred in the brief space at my command to strive to reach what may be called the central truths of his character. He has been so much misrepresented, he is still so greatly misunderstood, that it is far more important to sketch his truest and deepest characteristics, than to give the most interesting account of his personal appearance or mode of life. I have therefore sought to show what he is; and now let me say what he is *not*. He is

not a charlatan—never was man more free from the suspicion of charlatanry. He is not a self-seeker. He is not an adventurer. He is not—he never could be—a soldier of fortune, hiring himself out to the service of those who paid him best. With some defects of manner, possibly some acerbities of temper, he is still one of the simplest, purest, and noblest men who have ever done honour to the public life of a great country.

I said I would speak of his achievements—but surely they are graven on the very hearts of my readers! Even his contemporaries cannot deny to this man the merit of having accomplished greater works in legislation than any other statesman of modern times. A bare list of the reforms and improvements in which he has had a leading part must suffice. They are the Repeal of the Corn Laws, the French Treaty, and the final adoption of Free Trade; the abolition of the

taxes upon knowledge, of the religious disabilities of the Jews, of the restrictions on the borough franchise, and of the limitation of the University privileges; the disestablishment of the Irish Church; the reform of the Irish land system; the remodelling of the Army; the adoption of the Ballot; the introduction of a national system of Education; and the substitution of arbitration for war as a means of settling international controversies. These constitute some of Mr. Gladstone's claims to the gratitude of the English people. Can it be necessary to add to the list?

*THE EDITOR OF THE
'TIMES.'*

THE EDITOR OF THE 'TIMES.'

'GOOD heavens!' cried the Duke of Wellington one day, 'that is the most powerful man in England.' It was Mr. Barnes, the Editor of the *Times*, to whom the great Duke applied these words; and that they were hardly exaggerated, was proved by the fact that the gentleman in question had just dictated to the Duke's own Ministry the conditions upon which alone he would consent to support it in the columns of the *Times*.

I do not propose to speak in this sketch

of any particular individual. Remembering the care with which the Editor of the *Times* has always hedged himself round from the public gaze, it would be impertinent to do so. I merely wish to write of the impersonal editor, or in other words, of the political director of the greatest of English newspapers, and of his place in the political hierarchy. Very interesting, no doubt, would it be to trace the career of individual editors, and to see how they were successful just in proportion as they possessed that fine journalistic instinct which no man can acquire by training or study, and without which no man can ever be a great editor. Very interesting, too, would it be to trace the history of such a journal as the *Times*, to follow its rise from small beginnings, to observe its connection with the two political parties and with the many great questions which have stirred the world

since it became a power in the State, and to chronicle those gallant struggles for recognition which have ended in so complete a triumph. But to do this would be to digress from the chief purpose of these sketches; and I must therefore content myself with an attempt to lay before my readers some account of the position which the Editor of the *Times*—taking him as the foremost representative of English journalism—holds in the political system of Europe.

And, to begin with, let me say something of the true functions of the newspaper Press as a political power, because upon this subject not a little misapprehension seems to prevail, even in quarters where it might be thought that the truth would be fully understood. We are all proud of our English newspaper Press; of the part it has taken in the earlier struggles

for freedom ; of the enterprise it has shown in gathering news from every quarter of the world ; and of the general fairness, ability, and good-temper with which it is conducted. But few seem to recognise the most valuable and important of all the qualities which a newspaper ought to possess. That quality is independence. Without independence the newspaper may, no doubt, be a power in the State, but it is a power prostituted basely, even though it be used to serve great and good ends. Yet the popular notion, alike among Liberals and Conservatives, is that the newspaper should be the mere creature of a particular party.

The editor is expected to 'take his line' either from the leader of his party, or from some restricted local clique, which arrogates to itself the right of managing political affairs within the narrow limits of its own

jurisdiction. He must never blame actions which he may believe to be blameworthy on the part of his own political friends. To do so is to interfere with the success of 'the party.' He must never praise the conduct of his political opponents, for to do that will be to strengthen their hands. His sole duty, in the eyes of not a few people who might be supposed to be intelligent enough to hold a sounder opinion, is to echo with ever-increasing vehemence the utterances of his party leaders, to advocate with unremitting zeal the plans and the policy of which they are the authors or by which they hope to profit.

We have only to look to the French or the American Press in order to see how this principle, when it is fairly carried out, is certain to work. In both those countries, the Press, with a few honourable exceptions, is conducted upon strictly party lines,

and the result is that in both instances the party newspapers have ceased to have any legitimate influence which is worth mentioning. I say legitimate influence, because, unfortunately, the basest of newspapers has a certain illegitimate influence which it can always employ.

The hand which holds the editorial pen wields an enormous power. It can strike secretly at the weak points of an individual, dealing him one of those assassin's blows against which it is practically impossible for any man to defend himself effectually. When, therefore, a newspaper editor is a thoroughly unscrupulous person, however small may be his legitimate influence as a public teacher or leader, however contemptible may be his literary abilities, he may yet make himself a person to be dreaded, and may thus obtain an infamous authority which is none the

less real or potent because it is founded on his own criminal disregard of the laws of honour and good faith. But of that sober and rightful influence which it must be the highest ambition of an intelligent and honourable journalist to possess, the mere partisan writer can have nothing. The example of France and the United States, I said, proves the truth of this statement; alas! we need not go beyond the limits of our own country in order to obtain equally conclusive evidence in support of it.

Of recent years the English Press, both in the country and in London, has shown an increasing disposition to 'take sides,' not upon mere matters of principle, but upon all questions affecting political affairs, and to become not the independent critics but the uncompromising advocates, the thick-and-thin supporters, of the policy of


a party. What can be more melancholy than the spectacle which during the last three or four years has been presented by the majority of English newspapers? What, for example, can be more degrading to the Press than the fact that in nine cases out of ten it is easy to predicate the line which a particular newspaper will take upon a particular question? 'Dizzy has done such-and-such a thing; the *True Blue* to-morrow morning will swear that it is a stroke of Heaven-inspired statesmanship, and the *Thorough Yellow* will insist that it is an act which could only have been conceived by Lord Beaconsfield or the Father of Lies.' This is what the intelligent newspaper reader may predict any day concerning a majority of English newspapers. Ceasing to be independent critics of political affairs, guides and instructors on all important questions, active participants

in the formation of sound opinion on the topics of the day, they have become the eager advocates of their own political party, with apparently no better notion of their duty than that it is to 'follow their leader, right or wrong.'

For the fact that the English Press has even now only partially fallen into this evil condition, and that for many years it was more independent in its views and fairer in its criticisms than the Press of any other country, the credit must, I think, be awarded to the Editor of the *Times*. I am well aware that for the present a change seems to have taken place in the policy of our great English journal, and that it has of late fallen into that very vice of strong partisanship which I am condemning; but I cannot forget the great and honourable services which it rendered during many long years to the English

public by its resolute adoption of a policy of independence, the rigid determination with which it refused to make itself the mere tool of any party or Ministry whatever.

I may be asked, however, if a newspaper ought never to take sides, or to advocate the policy of a particular party. Nothing can possibly be farther from my intention than to lay down such a proposition. A newspaper editor has no more right than any other man to be impartial in the sense of being indifferent upon questions of principle. His political faith, on the contrary, should be a robust one ; and for my part, speaking as a Liberal, I should be glad if every newspaper editor in England were a Liberal also. But the editor, wielding real power and bearing a great responsibility, has no right to make himself the mere tool and creature even



of the party with whose general principles he agrees. It is his business to stand entirely aloof from party organisations; to decline direct relationships with party leaders; and whilst ever giving an honest advocacy to the principles which he holds, to weigh the various acts both of his opponents and his friends with an eye to their intrinsic merits rather than to their purely partisan significance. This is his business, because, in very truth, the newspaper Press is, or ought to be, the mouth-piece and organ of public opinion, of that 'yet auguster thing, veiled though it be, than Parliament or King,' which forms the very foundation of all sound political institutions. And I may say at once that the newspaper editor who respects himself and his great profession can take no other course than this. He may be punished by the abuse of those who are unable to understand

fairness, justice, and candour in political discussion ; but he will be rewarded by the enormously increased influence he secures not only among the members of both political parties whose principles are tolerably well fixed, but among that floating mass of the English public who are for ever halting between two opinions, and who, as a matter of fact, generally hold the scales at an election between Whig and Tory.

The Editor of the *Times* during more than one generation has carried into practice that idea of his duties and functions which I have endeavoured to describe. He has been, it is true, a partisan holding first Conservative and then Liberal principles ; but with a few rare exceptions, we can point to no instance in which he has been the mere partisan. Charged as he frequently has been with inconsistency, he can

at least plead that there has been a method in the inconsistency, and that he has always sought to be the mouthpiece of the general public opinion of his day. His most lamentable failures, it will generally be admitted, have occurred when he has abandoned this *rôle* and has made himself the thorough-going advocate or assailant of some particular Ministry or public man. It must not be supposed that I hold the *Times* up to the public gaze as a model for imitation. I cannot defend it from many charges of wavering, and even of insincerity, which have from time to time been brought against it ; I cannot pretend to approve of the political opinions which it has frequently expressed, nor even, perhaps, of the general bias of the Editor as revealed in the leading articles. But I maintain that by asserting the independence of the Press, by insisting upon the right of criticising the actions of

friends as well as opponents, and by steadfastly resisting the attempts to make his newspaper a mere party organ, he has done honour to English journalism, has added enormously to its influence, and has done much to procure for it the great reputation which it now enjoys throughout the world.

I am well aware that there are many public men who treat with contempt the notion that a newspaper editor has any right to hold or express opinions of his own—that is, when they happen to be opposed to the opinions of his party chiefs. It is notorious, however, that those who are most impatient of newspaper criticism are those who are themselves the most ignorant and incapable of public men. That the opinions of the *Times* on any given subject deserve to be dismissed with contempt, cannot be the view of thoughtful or intelligent persons. For, after all, who is better qualified to pro-


nounce a sound political criticism than the editor of a great newspaper like the *Times*? In the first place, such a man must be—nay, he notoriously is—a person of great intellectual endowments, who owes his position not to any favouritism, but to his own exceptional qualifications for it. He must, in addition, be a man who, originally gifted with that journalistic instinct of which I have already spoken, has been accustomed during many years not merely to discuss all political questions, but to express opinions on them which have in turn been submitted to the ordeal of criticism by hundreds of thousands of readers. Furthermore, it is, and for many years has been, the business of his life to study politics at home and abroad with the unremitting diligence with which other men study the share market, or the price of cotton, or the secrets and fluctuations of the iron trade. What *can*

the average Member of Parliament, who has been suddenly hoisted from his warehouse or his office, or his yacht or his shooting box, to a seat in Parliament, know of political affairs in their widest sense, in comparison with such a man ?

But above all, I reveal no secret when I say that the Editor—though if he be anything at all, he must be the leading and guiding spirit of the *Times* or any other newspaper—does not stand alone. Mr. Kinglake devoted many burning pages of his great History to the denunciation of the *Times* 'Company,' as he called it. But what is the real *Times* 'Company?' It consists not merely of the Editor, but of a staff of men trained like himself to the constant study of political and social subjects, and some of whom hold no secondary position in society and the world ; it embraces a dozen of the ablest

cosmopolitan journalists, men stationed at Berlin, at Paris, at Vienna, at Constantinople, where they have exceptional facilities for learning the true meaning of every political movement; it is completed by a body of proprietors whose opinions justly have weight in the editorial room, and who are, I presume, as little likely as any capitalists to take flighty views of grave political questions.

When, therefore, to the personal qualifications and training of the Editor of the *Times*, we add the unsurpassed means for gathering facts and arriving at sound conclusions which are open to him, we may well admit that the opinions of the paper which he rules ought to be worth at least as much as those of any average Cabinet Minister. Is it well that the vast power which he wields in virtue of the position he thus holds should be devoted to the un-



conditional and indiscriminating advocacy of a particular Government or party, instead of being used to give weight to independent criticisms founded upon the broad interests of the public and the application of those fundamental political principles which he holds? I trust my readers will agree with me that not merely in the case of the *Times*, but in that of all other newspapers, some measure of independence from party control, some degree of fairness and impartiality in judging public events, is the most valuable of all the qualities which a newspaper editor can possess.

SIR CHARLES W. DILKE, M.P.

VOL. I.

H

[SIR CHARLES WENTWORTH DILKE is the eldest son of the late Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, Bart., who received his title in consideration of his services in connection with the Great Exhibition of 1851. He was born in 1843, and married, in 1872, Eliza, only daughter of W. A. G. Sheill. She died in 1874. Educated at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Elected for Chelsea in December 1868. Sir Charles Dilke is a writer of considerable power. Among his works are 'Greater Britain,' a political treatise suggested by a tour through the British Colonies and foreign possessions ; and the 'Fall of Prince Florestan of Monaco,' a political satire. He is the proprietor of the *Athenæum*.]

SIR C. W. DILKE.



SOME seven or eight years ago a young Member of Parliament, whose chief claim to anything like public recognition was his connection with the founder of an important literary journal, and with a gentleman who had been attached to the scientific, artistic, and literary 'Court' of the Prince Consort, made a speech by which he suddenly became notorious. The speech was made in the Lecture Room at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and the speaker was Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, the Member for Chelsea. There is no need now to recall

all the incidents of a controversy which excited a good deal of attention in 1871.


Sir Charles Dilke, who had been returned to Parliament in 1868, had apparently espoused Republican opinions, and, being very young and very enthusiastic, he had felt it to be a duty to make his views known in some way to the world at large. Unfortunately, the particular method he chose was not calculated to lead him to any very brilliant success. In his speech at Newcastle, and if I mistake not, in others which he subsequently delivered elsewhere, he took the ground that the English Monarchy cost more than it was worth, and he fortified the case upon which he appealed to the public by small criticisms on the petty cash expenses of the Royal Court, including even the sums expended in the laundry of the Sovereign. He had, of course, a certain following; for those were days in which

English Radicalism was very restless and very impatient, and in which any new departure in politics was certain to be hailed with delight by men who believed that the General Election of 1868 ought to be followed by the complete reconstruction of society from the foundations upwards.

The young Member for Chelsea became the favourite and hero of that section of the Liberal party which seeks to atone for the weakness of its intelligence by the strength of its language, and those critics who ventured to suggest that Sir Charles Dilke was wasting his energies by devoting himself to an exposition of the washing-bills of Queen Victoria came in for a good deal of tolerably harmless abuse. For a time it might have been thought that a new political party was on the point of being formed, and that a real 'Red,' seated in the House of Commons, as Member for a metropolitan constituency,

was to be its leader. But one day an unfortunate event happened, which blighted all the hopes of the anti-Monarchical party, as if by an untimely frost. The Prince of Wales fell ill, and from the hour when his illness became serious down to the present moment nothing further has been heard of the movement which it was once supposed that Sir Charles Dilke was ready to lead against the Throne.

It was a false start in life which the young and aspiring politician had made, and the blunder was serious enough to have proved fatal to a man of merely ordinary capacity. But Sir Charles Dilke is not at all a common-place person; and although but a few years have elapsed since he made the mistake which I have ventured to recall, he has already more than effaced the evil consequences of his error, and has secured for himself a place with the most



distinguished of the younger men among our politicians. It is no secret, indeed, that the veteran leaders of both political parties regard the member for Chelsea as the most promising of all the younger Members of the House of Commons. He may never be Prime Minister of England; for the chances in favour of any particular person gaining that splendid dignity are always few and faint; but it is at least quite certain that he is much more likely to reach the highest place in the political world than many of his contemporaries who sit beside him, and whose names are far more frequently upon the lips of the public than is his.

Quietly and modestly remaining in the background—ever since that one false start of which I have spoken—Sir Charles Dilke has spent the years of his servitude in the House of Commons not in making flashy appearances on public platforms, but in

steady and solid preparation for the work and the life of a statesman. He has taken to politics as a business, and he has studied that business to such good purpose, that there are few men of his age in England who can compare with him in depth of knowledge or in breadth of judgment. It is rumoured that during the many months which he spends every year in retirement in his picturesque retreat on the shores of the Mediterranean, he employs himself on a *magnum opus* by means of which he hopes to gain a permanent place among English historians. The work in question is said to be a History of the Present Century, and if extensive reading, patient and long-continued study of all the sources from which information can be obtained, sagacity in dealing with political problems, and that practical insight into the secrets of statecraft which can only be ac-

quired by those who have been actually engaged in public life, added to a very marked literary ability, are sufficient to ensure the success of such a work, then Sir Charles Dilke's book will be a success of no ordinary kind. It is a hopeful feature of the present House of Commons that, in spite of the intellectual dulness and poverty which are its leading characteristics, it should contain at least one young man—and Sir Charles Dilke does not, I trust, stand alone in this respect—who is willing to sacrifice the cheap popularity of the present moment in order to secure permanent influence hereafter.

At a time when political charlatanism is the fashion, and when it would almost seem that the man who can make the most extravagant speech or formulate the most ridiculous theories on either side in politics is most certain to win the applause of his

party, it is refreshing to meet with a comparatively young politician who feels that political knowledge is not to be acquired by intuition, and who, following the best traditions of statesmanship, is ready to give the strongest years of his life to the work of fitting himself for the great duties and responsibilities which devolve upon the Member of the English House of Commons.

Not many of the younger men in the House of Commons show themselves willing to serve the laborious apprenticeship to the whole science and craft of politics through which Sir Charles Dilke is thus passing. To the majority of Members, the House is either a place in which social distinction may be gained, or in which some pet doctrine or pet interest may be advanced. Fortunately, however, the old traditions of a race of young men who have, as it were, gone to school in the House of Commons,

and who are willing to proceed slowly though surely from grade to grade, have not been entirely forgotten; and the Member for Chelsea, and one or two others who might be named, are doing their best to prove that Parliament is not yet given up wholly to the possession of those wealthy middle-class nonentities who of late years have crowded into it in such overwhelming numbers. Few men may now have it in their power to offer 'safe seats' in the House to the most promising youths of their acquaintance. The budding statesman must fight for himself, and he is more than commonly fortunate if he succeed in winning his way into the great political arena before his mind has lost the elasticity and impressionableness of youth. Yet despite all the drawbacks with which ambitious and clever young men have now to contend, they do occasionally succeed in slipping through the portals of the House ;


and there are fortunately one or two among them who, having done so, give themselves up to the serious study of politics after the fashion which was not uncommon in the days of pocket boroughs, among the chosen nominees of aristocratic patrons.

It is his position as one of the most promising of these younger members of the House of Commons that has led me to make Sir Charles Dilke the subject of this sketch. The place he has already gained in Parliament is an enviable one; but few who know him can doubt that far higher distinctions are in store for him. Though not endowed with that gift of eloquence which is so precious to the Parliamentarian, he has the faculty, hardly less valuable, of clear and accurate exposition. He is also blessed with a strong instinct for business, that kind of instinct which the statesman needs more, perhaps, than any other man

in the world, but which, unfortunately, he too often lacks. More valuable, however, than either of these qualifications is the spirit in which he deals with the political questions that come under his consideration. Perfectly fearless in the exposition of his views, as was shown at the time of the incident to which I referred in beginning this sketch, he is also gifted with that capacity for seeing all round a question which, unhappily, has always been rare among politicians. The merely partisan view of any topic is one which he seldom takes; though, on the other hand, it is not to be supposed that he loses himself in the elaborate theories of the doctrinaire.


The course he has taken on the Eastern Question furnishes an excellent illustration of the way in which he deals with great and exciting subjects of controversy. Upon that question he has never pretended to

go all lengths with the extreme members of his own party. Better acquainted with Continental politics than the majority of Members of Parliament, and possibly not uninfluenced by the opinions of his friend M. Gambetta, he has never treated what may be called the Russian side of the Eastern problem with the fatuous indifference to well-established facts which has unfortunately distinguished a portion of the Liberal party. But at the same time he has never wavered in his attachment to the cause of European freedom, and in his desire to see law, liberty, and the principles of progress introduced into that portion of Europe which has so long remained under the iron hand of the Mussulman. The result is that in all his speeches on this subject he has shown a freshness, an intelligence, and a fulness of information which entitle him to rank among the most



trustworthy authorities on Eastern affairs. Nor is it only in dealing with the great problem of Turkey that he can take a line of his own and follow it out with courage and consistency. Upon most questions of Continental politics he is better informed than are nine-tenths of his fellow-members. To take only one instance, by way of example, I might name his diligent study of French affairs, and his correct appreciation of the issues involved in that great constitutional struggle which, beginning on September 4th, 1870, seems only now to be approaching a close.

M. Gambetta is to-day recognised by everybody as one of the greatest of Frenchmen; and no one in this country can now gain credit by ranging himself on his side. But Sir Charles Dilke was one of the warmest of his English friends and defenders when he was still abused



as a 'raving madman' by those who had never taken the trouble to master the truth concerning his motives and actions. Perhaps it may be a far-fetched fancy ; but I own to a belief that the personal friendship between these two men, one of whom has already risen so high, and the other of whom seems to have before him a career so full of a brilliant promise, may hereafter become a fact of international importance. At all events, we may be glad that a young man who is steadily though unostentatiously pressing his way to the front should have had his ideas widened, and to a certain extent moulded, by direct personal intercourse with one of the master-minds of Europe.

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PRINCE BISMARCK.

VOL. I.

I

[OTTO, PRINCE BISMARCK, was born at Schœnhausen, April 1st, 1815; and married, 1847, Jeanne-Frédérique, daughter of Henri de Puttkamer. Educated at Göttingen and Griefswald. Became a Member of the Diet of the Province of Saxony (Prussia), 1846, and of the General Diet in 1847. In 1851, was appointed Prussian Diplomatic Representative at Frankfort. In March 1859, was sent as Ambassador to St. Petersburg, and, in May 1862, was transferred to Paris. In September of the same year was made Minister of Foreign Affairs for Prussia. Was created a Count in September 1865, and a Prince and Chancellor of the German Empire in 1871.]


PRINCE BISMARCK.



FOR at least ten years past Prince Bismarck has been the central figure in Europe. Surrounded by subservient flatterers, who have treated him as though he were something better than mortal man, he has also been the mark at which the shafts of a thousand, nay, of a million, venomous antagonists have been shot. No man living probably has so many enemies as the German Chancellor. There is no corner of Europe where his influence has not been felt, and there is hardly a single spot where it has not been felt in an unpleasant way. This

fact must be borne in mind in estimating his character. Whatever may be his faults, it is quite certain that he is not so black as he is painted by some people. Whilst it is the fashion among his admirers to laud him as the greatest statesman of modern times, he is decried as no statesman at all by a not inconsiderable party in the political world. It must be said at once that this party is altogether without reason for its belief.

Prince Bismarck is no charlatan. Without saying that he has the very highest intellectual endowments, or that he is a master of political economy or of the craft of Machiavelli, I need only point to what he has done within the last fifteen years in order to prove that he is a real statesman of a very high, if not of the highest, order. He found Prussia weak and distracted, verging daily nearer and nearer to Liberalism, and possessing little or no influence in Europe, or even in



Germany. He has made her the leader of the strongest military empire in the world; he has given the Fatherland unity and strength; and by the sheer force of his own iron will he has rolled back the advancing tide of Liberalism, and for a season at least has erected a barrier beyond which the constitutional forces of his country cannot advance. Whether we admire them or not, these are wonderful achievements; and it would be absurd to deny great powers of mind and will to the man who has accomplished them. We may treat with contempt the foolish flatterers who regard him as the grandest and greatest figure in Europe; but it would be ridiculous to deny that he is, as I have already said, the central personage in the political world.

The character of such a man must in any case be an interesting study; it so happens, however, that in the case of Prince Bismarck

his personal peculiarities are so remarkable that he furnishes far more than the average amount of material which even a great man might be expected to supply to the student of character.

I do not propose to enter into biographical details of his career. They have been often published, and I must assume that most of my readers are familiar with a life which has been spent in the service of Prussia, and which in its mere outward incidents, and apart from its astounding success, has not differed greatly from the lives of most German politicians and statesmen. The inner life of the man has, however, but recently been revealed to the world by means of a wonderful piece of Boswellian literature,—Dr. Moritz Busch's book, called 'Bismarck in the Franco-German War;' and it is to this new source of information that we are indebted for most of the light which has

been thrown upon the Chancellor's true character.

If we may believe Dr. Busch, who is himself a Bismarck-worshipper of the most pronounced type, his hero presents at least as many defects as most men. He is vain and boastful, constantly declaring that he alone is able to manage German affairs, and talking with sublime self-consciousness of the irreparable loss which his removal would inflict upon the Fatherland. This, of course, is one of the ordinary characteristics of very able men, and it is not in itself objectionable. It may be said, indeed, that if Prince Bismarck had not been a firm believer in himself, he would never have risen to the position which he now occupies. But it is different when we see that this inordinate vanity is united to a bitter jealousy of people around him, and to something very like a malignant remembrance of any of the wrongs which

have been inflicted upon him. We find him telling Busch, with great simplicity, that he lies awake at night to think of the injuries he has received, and to contrive schemes for repaying his enemies; which, it must be said, he generally succeeds in doing. As for his jealousy of any who can be counted among his rivals, we have only to recall his persecution of the unhappy Count Arnim, in order to satisfy ourselves of the extent to which this vice governs his character. It is probable that no more scandalous personal story than that of Bismarck's plot for the ruin of the man who had been put forward as his possible successor will blacken the political history of this generation. Bismarck's conduct in this matter was without a shadow of excuse, unless, indeed, his morbid jealousy can be alleged in palliation of his offence. He hunted the vain, weak man who had come across his path to the very death, and did

not relax his hold upon his quarry until it was absolutely destroyed.

United to these strong features of his character, however, there are some strange elements of weakness. It is clear that the German Chancellor is very superstitious. He does not like to begin any important piece of business on a Friday; he objects to form one of a party of thirteen at the dinner-table; he believes in dreams and omens, and even goes about the world possessed with the uncomfortable conviction that he knows the exact day of his death. Another personal trait which must not be omitted in any sketch of his character, is his love of good eating and drinking. Like Cavour, he only takes one meal a-day, in the evening, but at that meal he gorges himself like a boa constrictor. Busch tells some wonderful stories of the feats of gluttony of which the great man is

capable. On one occasion he showed such a capacity for swallowing champagne, that even the late King of Prussia, who, it may be remembered, enjoyed during his lifetime the nickname of 'King Clicquot,' publicly ordered him to desist. And Bismarck is evidently proud of having brought down upon himself this rebuke! The whole story of his stay in Versailles during the siege of Paris is enlivened by the recital of his mighty achievements in eating the indigestible delicacies of North Germany, in drinking the sparkling wines of France, or the less seductive produce of his own German grapes, and in smoking Bremen cigars of doubtful quality. No teetotal society can pretend to claim him as an example of the benefits of temperance.

Turning from these personal traits to his political character and convictions, it is easy to see that his individual prejudices

have played no small part in moulding the policy of Germany. I do not suppose that in all Europe a statesman of narrower sympathies than Bismarck can be found. You see this really remarkable narrowness and provincialism alike in his least and in his greatest actions. He hates the French, and loses no opportunity of letting you know that he regards them as being little better than the long-sought 'missing link' of Darwin. He has a surly dislike for England and English statesmen, and above all, for our free institutions; the Americans he evidently favours, but that is chiefly because they are so far off; the Russians he treats as big babies who have no right to a mind of their own, and whose business it is to take their inspiration from him; at his new ally Austria he sneers continually.

Listening to his political diatribes, you would think that it was the talk of an

ignorant shopkeeper, who had never gone beyond the limits of some wretched little Prussian town, that was being poured into your ears. But suddenly, in the midst of this unpleasant betrayal of narrowness and prejudice, you are treated to a piece of brilliant common sense, or rather of far-seeing shrewdness and sagacity, which shows you that this concentration of Bismarck's vision has cleared and strengthened it, and that he sees all the more distinctly because he looks only at a narrow field. And this remarkable clearness of vision is aided by a steadiness of purpose arising from the fact that he never shifts his standpoint. Quite openly and frankly he bids the world understand that he looks at every possible question from one point of view alone.

It is as a German of Germans, as a Prussian Minister who is Pomeranian by birth, that he regards all the affairs of the

world. He may occasionally give his advice in some question which does not directly affect those German interests of which he feels himself to be the sole guardian, but in such a case he is utterly careless not only as to the reception with which his opinions meet, but as to the character of those opinions themselves. It is only when Germany is affected that he feels it necessary to put forth all his strength of mind and will, and to apply his great powers to the solution of the problem in hand. But in such a case woe betide those whose interests or whose rights happen to clash with his policy. It matters not that they have law and justice alike on their side ; they are thrust out of the way as though they were nothing more than the twigs which occasionally obstruct the forest paths at Varzin.

Prince Bismarck has shown on numberless occasions that in any political emer-

gency in which Germany is opposed to other Powers, he knows only one law, that being the interest of his country. In carrying out that law he is absolutely conscienceless and pitiless. He will without hesitation commit breaches of faith which deserve to be styled infamous — such as those which mark, for example, the history of his dealings with the Schleswig-Holstein question and with the Hanoverian Royal Family. He will at the same time act with a deliberate cruelty which almost parallels that displayed by some of the most merciless of the Roman emperors.

Nothing jars upon one more in reading Busch's book than the constant revelations which it affords of this side of the Chancellor's character. It is no calumny upon him to say that in the Franco-German war he would have liked all the French prisoners to have been butchered in cold

blood. He is constantly abusing the German army for making prisoners when it would be so much easier to shoot all of the enemy who fall into their power ; he is constantly complaining of the leniency shown by the military courts in dealing with the free-shooters, and never once, although frequently importuned to do so, does he raise his voice to plead for a single act of clemency or mercy. Yet, whilst thus absolutely without 'bowels of compassion' in any case in which his interests seem to him to make rigour and harshness advisable, he is not by any means an ill-natured person. Most people know how when M. Thiers, worn out by his fruitless pleadings on behalf of France, fell asleep in Bismarck's room at Versailles, the German Chancellor laid his own cloak over the great Frenchman, to prevent his catching cold. And in many other cases you find his merciless-

ness united to a certain rough good humour. Nay, on one occasion he tells Busch that it is the duty of the Germans to be very polite to those French civilians who are found in arms,—but to hang them all the same.

I have said enough to show that it is not without reason that Prince Bismarck has become known (from a phrase of his own) as the man of blood and iron. It is to his courage, or perhaps I ought to say, to his audacity, to his unbending determination to reach his end by any possible means, without regard to the obstacles that lie in his path, and to his entire freedom from those scruples of compassion and consideration for others which, happily, exercise a certain restraint upon most men, that he owes his wonderful and brilliant success. It might almost be thought that he was born without a heart, that he was nothing more than a great thinking machine, so free is he

in his public actions from the more amiable weaknesses of humanity. Such men are rare in the world; and it is fortunate that they are. But there are times when people of this stamp are simply invaluable to a struggling or falling cause. It is the great good fortune of Bismarck to have been born at such a time, and in a country where his peculiar qualities happen at this moment to be specially required, and consequently to be specially valued. Fifty years hence a Bismarck will be as impossible in Germany as he is to-day in England. But from 1864 down to 1878, the German people required a strong, resolute, relentless, clear-sighted man, gifted with the precious quality of simplicity in thought and action, absolutely fearless, and absolutely free from conscientious scruples. Without such a man they could hardly have hoped to gain the great goal of their ambition; with

his aid, that goal has been triumphantly attained.

But the pressing need for his services seems to have passed, and now the Germans find their Chancellor, with his old-world prejudices, his narrow political and economical ideas, his deep-rooted hatred of Liberalism in all its forms, his jealousy of all interference with his will, a burden to be borne rather than a staff upon which to lean. The recent elections for the Prussian Parliament have, indeed, shown that the spell he has cast over his fellow-countrymen has not yet been removed. The magic of his name, aided, possibly, by his somewhat theatrical journey to Vienna, has again proved all-powerful in a political contest ; and he has had the satisfaction of seeing that the majority of the Prussian people are still willing to sacrifice their cherished convictions to their personal belief in him. But

the time, we may rest assured, is not far distant when they will break loose from the fetters in which he has striven to bind them, and when, without undoing the great work in the achievement of which he has had so large a share, they will obey the resistless laws of progress, and advance to those heights of social and political freedom which he has so long forbidden them to approach. The errors of the great man's career seem to grow in number as that career draws nearer to its close ; and though the nerve and resolution which have so long distinguished him are still to be discovered in all that he says and does, it is impossible that he should continue to impose his iron will for any length of time upon a great and growing people. He has served his end ; he has accomplished his work, and the day of his final retirement from the stage on which he has played so great a

part cannot be long deferred. Yet ere he goes, he is worth study and observation as one of the last of that great race of Protestant Tory despots who have from time to time been so conspicuous in the world's affairs, but who will soon, happily, be numbered among the extinct races of mankind.

LORD SALISBURY.

[THE Right Honourable ROBERT ARTHUR TALBOT GASCOYNE CECIL, third Marquis of Salisbury, was born in 1830. Educated at Eton and Christ College, Oxford. Represented Stamford in the House of Commons till the death of his father, the second Marquis, in 1869. Was Secretary of State for India 1867-8 ; re-appointed in February 1874 ; and succeeded Lord Derby as Secretary for Foreign Affairs in March 1878. Married a daughter of the late Baron Alderson.]

LORD SALISBURY.

IT is little more than two years since Lord Salisbury was the most popular English statesmen. We live fast now-a-days, but it is hardly possible that any of us can have forgotten the strong hopes excited, the pleasure manifested, when it was made known that the man who was then Secretary for India was to represent England at the Conference at Constantinople. Even the excited politicians of the St. James's Hall Convention, who greeted the mention of Lord Derby's name with vehement shouts of disapprobation, were

ready to applaud lustily whenever a reference was made to the selected Plenipotentiary of England. Mr. Gladstone himself gave utterance to his satisfaction at the choice which had been made, and expressed his confidence in the courage and honesty of Lord Salisbury. Nor was the general feeling in favour of the English representative greatly affected by the utter failure of his mission. It was known when Lord Salisbury came back that he was almost as violently anti-Turkish in his sentiments as the ex-Premier; and whoever else might be held responsible for the failure of the Conference, it seemed to be generally believed that he at least was guiltless.

It is curious now to recall the undoubted fact that, in the early spring of 1877, when Russia and Turkey were preparing for that great struggle in which one of them was to be so hopelessly overthrown, there was

a general belief among English Liberals that Lord Derby was the greatest culprit in the Ministry. Even the noisiest members of the Freeman faction were content to except Lord Salisbury from their sweeping condemnation of those held responsible for the foreign policy of the Government.

It was not, of course, quite suddenly that the brilliant and powerful head of the great family of the Cecils had attained to this exceptional position among English politicians. Lord Salisbury's popularity with his political opponents was undoubtedly due in part to the fact that he was believed to have shown unusual courage, consistency, and honesty in the course of his public life. There were many incidents connected with his early career which had won for him the sympathy and admiration of his fellow-countrymen. The younger son of one of the greatest and wealthiest of English

Peers, he had incurred the disfavour of his father, and had lived for a considerable term in comparative, if not, indeed, in absolute poverty. Most persons knew how the Lord Robert Cecil of those days had gallantly maintained himself and his wife and children by the use of his pen; and even advanced Liberals were half inclined to forgive the exceptional bitterness of his writings, the absolute ferocity with which he attacked those who differed from him, out of regard for the 'pluck' which this young contributor to the *Saturday Review* and the *Morning Chronicle* had displayed in adopting literature as a profession. He had a seat in the House of Commons, and he had allowed men to feel that his tongue was as sharp as his pen. Yet his colleagues there were inclined to regard the acidity of his speeches, the narrowness of his political views, with the same leniency as was shown by the world

in general towards his writings in the Press. Men did not at that time give him credit for remarkable ability ; but they made large allowances for the sourness of his temper, and lived in the hope that under more favourable circumstances his character might ripen into mellowness.

It seemed as though those hopes were on the point of being fulfilled, after the death of his elder brother had placed him in the direct succession to the Marquisate. No sooner had he assumed the courtesy title of Lord Cranborne, than he began to show that after all he had better stuff in his composition than that of which the flippant and cynical journalist, the light skirmisher of the old Tory brigade, seemed to have been made. His abilities were speedily recognised by Lord Derby when he formed his Cabinet, and Lord Cranborne found himself, whilst still in his


youth, Secretary for India. It was then that he began to justify the expectations which had been formed of him by his friends. Laying aside the disagreeable cynicism and sourness which had previously distinguished him, he began to play the part of a laborious administrator, and a discreet and impartial statesman. The change was a remarkable one; but it only served to raise still higher the hopes which had been formed respecting his career. But at this point a memorable incident took place. Along with General Peel and Lord Carnarvon he retired from office, because he could not conscientiously approve of Mr. Disraeli's Reform Bill. It was unquestionably an immense sacrifice which the young politician thus made. At the very moment when he seemed to be getting into smooth water, after the troubled passage of his earlier years, and when a field of labour

was opening before him which would have satisfied all his ambitions, he relinquished his dearest hopes at the call of honour, and stepped aside into private life. Whatever may be the thought of his subsequent actions, Lord Salisbury undoubtedly deserves all the credit which he received for this retirement from Lord Derby's Government.

One of the results of that retirement was the establishment of something very like an active personal hatred between himself and his leader, Mr. Disraeli. No one who remembers the House of Commons of eleven or twelve years ago can have forgotten the bitter scorn with which Lord Cranborne treated the chief member of the Tory party, or the contemptuous indifference with which the latter repaid his most violent onslaughts. It was a great sight to see the haughty young nobleman, who in the darkest moments of

his life had never forgotten that he was a Cecil, writhing under the polished sarcasms of the plebeian who had assumed the leadership of the most aristocratic political party in the world.

None, for example, who were present in the House one memorable afternoon when Mr. Disraeli, having listened to the angry jibes of his old colleague with an air of imperturbable gravity, got up and jauntily remarked that 'the noble Lord's sarcasms are doubtless very severe, but they have one serious defect—they lack finish;' no one, I say, who was present on that occasion can have forgotten the angry flush which dyed the face of Lord Cranborne, or the look of scornful hatred which he flung towards the Treasury bench. Yet though the heir of the Cecils was no match in Parliamentary fence for the ex-conveyancer's clerk, the world sympathised




with him all the more because of the unequal combat into which he had entered ; and he received that kind of commendation which men are always anxious to bestow upon those who, at the call of honour, are willing to face certain defeat.

It is notorious that when the tide of political feeling at last turned, and it became evident that once again a Conservative Ministry was to be not merely in office but in power, there was much anxiety displayed by the Tories as to the attitude which Lord Salisbury might assume. He had never been openly reconciled to Mr. Disraeli, and though he might no longer abuse him in public, in private he spoke of him as bitterly as ever. Was it possible, in these circumstances, that the high-minded and resolute man who had seceded from the Ministry of 1867 would swallow his resentment and submit himself to the political

charlatan whom he had denounced with such energy but a few years before ?

Well, let us not be too hard on Lord Salisbury. The temptation was very great, and he succumbed to it. How far he had fallen in taking office under Mr. Disraeli was not, indeed, known at first. It was generally believed that he sacrificed himself to the entreaties of his party, and when, some months after the Government was formed, Mr. Disraeli took occasion to describe his own colleague in certain bitter words, which my readers probably remember, the world jumped to the conclusion that, although members of the same Government, they were still as far apart as ever. Thus it came to pass that Lord Salisbury began to be regarded as a kind of brake upon the Ministerial coach, a resolute, honest, and capable man, who was both able and willing to frustrate any of the




Premier's designs of which he did not approve, and who might, therefore, be trusted to prevent the full development of that policy of trickery and fireworks which Mr. Disraeli had already inaugurated. It was this fact, coupled with those incidents of his previous career to which I have briefly alluded, which led English Liberals in particular to rejoice when Lord Salisbury was sent as our representative to the Conference at Constantinople.

Alas! sufficient allowance had not been made for the despotic strength of the passion of ambition when it once takes full possession of the soul of an able man. Lord Salisbury, during the spring of 1877, saw clearly that only one obstacle lay between himself and the succession to the Tory leadership, and the curious freaks of which public opinion was guilty about that time justified him in believing that the

obstacle, after all, was not a very serious one. If he could get rid of the pretensions of Lord Derby, then he must stand before the world as the admitted and only possible successor of Lord Beaconsfield !

The secret history of the Ministerial intrigues and transactions of 1877 and 1878 has not yet been written. Probably we shall have to wait for the lifetime of a generation before the memoir-writers entertain us with a full recital of the truth concerning Lord Derby's disappearance from the ranks of the Ministry, and the establishment of Lord Salisbury in his place. Yet already certain things can be guessed at with sufficient accuracy—and they are not creditable to the character of the present Foreign Secretary. We know that Lord Derby, for example, was the victim of a cruel injustice on the part of those who believed that he was the secret cause of the




troubles and difficulties which surrounded the Cabinet, or that he, more than other men, was anxious for a resort to a policy of menace. We know further that between his return from Constantinople and his appointment to the Foreign Office in succession to Lord Derby, Lord Salisbury had entirely changed his opinions. He had done so without allowing the public to know anything of the change. He still made speeches in which he ridiculed the Chauvinists, and almost seemed to sneer at the alarms of Lord Beaconsfield; he still got credit for being the essentially pacific member of the Cabinet. Yet we now know that he had accepted the views of the Premier, and had become the active and pliable supporter of his policy. We know further that in the bitter dissensions which broke out in the Cabinet about Christmas 1877, it was Lord Derby—the spiritless, colour-

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less Foreign Secretary whom all political parties were never tired of abusing!—who withstood the imperious attempts of Lord Beaconsfield to force his own views upon his colleagues, and Lord Salisbury—the high-minded, resolute Lord Cranborne of other days!—who made himself the meek and subservient instrument of the man he had so long detested and opposed. We know finally that, as the result of this change of attitude, when Lord Derby had been ‘jockeyed’ out of the Cabinet by a series of intrigues of which it is not yet possible to speak in detail, Lord Salisbury gained the great office which had so long been the object of his ambition.

Since the direction of our foreign affairs passed into his hands, it would almost seem that Lord Salisbury has lost something of the courage and resolution with the possession of which he was formerly credited.




The story of his dealings with Russia in regard to Central Asia and Afghanistan, and the weakness which made itself apparent in the Ministry at the close of the first Afghan campaign, when the advance upon Cabul was abandoned in order to cut down the expenses of the war, are not likely to inspire us with any particular respect for the firmness or strength of will of the Foreign Secretary. Nor can it be said that the results of the Anglo-Turkish Convention are such as to justify a belief in his superior wisdom or foresight as a statesman.

The Lord Robert Cecil of other days is now one of the greatest powers in the State. Still a young man, he has won the Garter ; he holds a post which gives him rank with the foremost statesmen in Europe, and he is the recognised political heir of his quondam foe and present associate, the Prime Minister of England. His ambition was inordinate,

but it has not been unsatisfied ; and a brilliant success has crowned the labours of his life. Yet there are some, and I count myself among the number, who, if they wanted to draw the brightest and most creditable picture of the present Lord of Hatfield, would think rather of the struggling journalist whose worst fault was his youthful cynicism, or of the young politician who had 'stepped aside from the active life of politics' because he could not soil his hands with ignoble tricks and a discreditable surrender of principle, than of the powerful, illustrious, and successful Foreign Secretary, whom Lord Beaconsfield counts as his foremost and most devoted follower.

MR. JOSEPH COWEN.

[MR. JOSEPH COWEN is the eldest son of the late Sir Joseph Cowen, M.P. He was born at Blaydon, near Newcastle-on-Tyne, in 1831 ; and married Jane, daughter of the late Mr. John Thompson of Fatfield. Elected for Newcastle-on-Tyne in January 1874. Is proprietor of the 'Newcastle Daily Chronicle,' and has written largely both for that newspaper, and for other Advanced Liberal journals.]



MR. JOSEPH COWEN.



IT is not, perhaps, unusual for a Member of the House of Commons to become famous by reason of a single speech. From the days of 'Single-speech Hamilton' down to our own there have, in fact, been many instances of men attaining Parliamentary notoriety by an unexpected outburst of eloquence. The misfortune is, that in the great majority of these cases the first success has also been the last. The 'splendid speech' which, coming from an unknown man, has thrilled the House, and raised high expectations regarding the speaker's future, has, in

nine cases out of ten, been followed by attempts in which the ambition of the maiden effort was unaccompanied by its success, and in which painful evidence has been afforded of the real poverty of the mind, which for a moment had seemed to be so richly endowed.


Mr. Joseph Cowen is one of the men who have gained Parliamentary notoriety by a single speech ; but he is also one of the rare exceptions to the rule of which I have just spoken. His first speech, in other words, has been neither his last nor his best, but has been followed up by a series of oratorical successes, which have secured for him high rank among the independent Members of the House of Commons.

Those who were present on the occasion when Mr. Cowen delivered his memorable attack upon the Bill for creating the Queen Empress of India, unanimously declare that

he achieved one of the most unqualified triumphs which Parliament has ever witnessed. In spite of serious personal disadvantages, arising chiefly from his rough, northern accent, Mr. Cowen had not spoken many moments before the whole House was listening to him in breathless interest ; entranced not merely by the easy flow of his sentences and the choice English words of which they were constructed, but by the fine imagery and striking illustrations which gave colour and life to his vigorous argument. When he had finished, and his fellow-Members were released from the spell he had thrown over them, the verdict of the whole assembly was that a brilliant addition had been made to the long roll of Parliamentary orators. A House of Commons, which up to that moment had been singularly barren and commonplace, had suddenly shown that it contained at least one man not unworthy

to succeed the eloquent veterans whose final appearance could not be long deferred.

That which was a great surprise to the House of Commons and the country at large, was no surprise at all to those who had known Mr. Cowen before he entered Parliament. Though still a young man, the Member for Newcastle has had a training in public speaking probably equal to that of any other politician of our time. From his youth upwards he has been accustomed to speak in public. The youthful Spurgeon was not more irresistibly drawn by the weight of his own genius to the pulpit than was young Cowen to the platform. For a quarter of a century he has been known as the most powerful and eloquent political speaker in the North of England. His oratorical reputation, even in his own town of Newcastle, did not, however, reach its full height until the closing months of 1873, when, as the selected



candidate of the Liberal party, Mr. Cowen delivered a series of addresses to the electors which fairly entranced all who heard them, and which astonished even those among his friends who had formed the highest opinion of his capabilities. I do not hesitate to say that only two other men in England — Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright—could have delivered the splendid series of speeches which fell in such rapid succession from the lips of Mr. Cowen during that exciting contest. Scarcely, however, had he gained his well-earned victory than Mr. Gladstone dissolved his House of Commons, and another contest not less severe than the former had to be fought.

Once again Mr. Cowen plunged into the fight, and carried everything before him by his energy and eloquence. But the double strain to which he was thus subjected proved too much for him. He was attacked by

serious illness, and for no inconsiderable period it seemed only too probable that his political career was destined to close at the moment of his return to Parliament. Happily, the rest which was now imposed upon him had the desired effect, and in 1876 the Member for Newcastle found himself at length fully equal to the duties of Parliamentary life. Then it was that, throwing himself into the debate on the trumpery Royal Titles Bill (one of those pieces of legislative upholstery which are so dear to the soul of the present Prime Minister), he achieved a reputation at a single stroke. Among those who rejoiced at this great personal triumph, there were none whose rejoicing was more unfeigned than was that of the advanced Liberals.

Mr. Cowen's name for more than twenty years had been a synonym for advanced opinions of every kind. In religion, in

politics, in sociology, he had been in the front of the army of progressive thinkers. So extreme, indeed, had been his views upon most of the great questions of the day, that Radicals and Liberals of the ordinary caste had found not a little difficulty in accepting him as their representative. It was, therefore, with natural pride and exultation that the advanced Radicals of the House of Commons hailed the new Parliamentary orator as one of themselves. His advent sufficed to extinguish the hopes of more than one self-seeking, pretentious mediocrity, whose claim to the future leadership of the Liberal party had been loudly trumpeted by himself or his personal admirers, and for a time it seemed certain that Mr. Cowen was destined to become not merely the most popular but the most powerful Radical in the House of Commons.

This hope, as we know, has not yet been

fulfilled. A curious combination of circumstances has for the moment led to a separation between Mr. Cowen and many of those with whom he is most closely in sympathy, and it is clear that like not a few other men, whose rapid rise to fame has stirred the envy of their smaller rivals, he runs some risk of being permanently punished, not merely for his political opinions, but for his personal superiority to the majority of those around him. The ostensible offence which has led to his estrangement from the Radical wing of the Liberal party has been his want of confidence in Russia during the exciting struggles of the last three years. This, I believe, sums up his real offending.

During the autumn of 1876, when a golden chance was offered to England of taking a decisive part in the settlement of the Eastern question, and when neither Con-

servative nor Liberal leaders, with the exception of Mr. Gladstone, had the courage to propose that this chance should be seized, Mr. Cowen was one of the men who were willing to employ the might of England in repressing Turkish tyranny and misrule. It would have been well for Europe if the views which at that time were advocated only in the newspapers or by the unofficial speakers of the Liberal party had secured acceptance. They were unfortunately disregarded, and Russia and Turkey were left face to face.

Up to this point Mr. Cowen had been as warm an advocate of Mr. Gladstone's policy as any other member of the House of Commons. But being a man of independence and intelligence, he declined to admit that no change had been made in the situation by the substitution of Russia for Europe as the dictator to Turkey. Throughout his


whole life he had cherished a profound distrust of that northern Empire which, next to Turkey itself, is unquestionably the most barbarous, despotic, ignorant, and dishonest of European States. His study of Eastern affairs did not, like that of most of those who now became his critics and antagonists, date from the publication of Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet on the Bulgarian horrors. During many years of an active public life, it had been his lot to see how the Russian Government had remained true to its most hateful traditions; how the Power which had destroyed Poland, re-enslaved Hungary, and aided in the growth of the Prussian autocracy, was still in 1876 as hostile to political, religious, and commercial freedom as she had been fifty years before.

Inspired by that hatred of Russia which had been instilled into him in his earliest years, and which had grown with his love

for freedom and his personal efforts on behalf of enslaved peoples, he could not believe that the Muscovite was to be trusted to act the part of 'liberator' to an oppressed nationality from any unselfish motives. Nor could he bring himself to forget, as so many of his political associates did, that the Turk, whatever might be the abominations of his government, was still a human being, possessing at least those common rights which belong to all mankind. Probably it was his traditional jealousy of Russia which in the first place enabled him to keep his head and to judge events upon their merits, at a time when the Turkophobists were in a majority, and when it was the fashion for one liberal newspaper to outvie another in the violence of its antagonism to the Ottoman Empire.

Perhaps Mr. Cowen would have done well to remember that this temporary delirium was founded upon a righteous indignation ;

perhaps, too, he would have acted more wisely if he could have laid aside all jealousy and suspicion of Russia, and accepted her for the moment as being all that she professed to be. But to suppose, because he did not take this course, that he is therefore an insincere Liberal, a friend of despotism and oppression, or a less clear-sighted politician than the most furious and foolish of his assailants, is to come to a conclusion that neither fair-play nor common sense can justify. No one, indeed, who has really mastered the first principles of Liberalism, no one who is not a slave to the narrowest partisanship, can consent to ostracise either Mr. Cowen or anybody else because, on the gravest and most complicated question of foreign politics with which this generation has been troubled, he has not on every occasion and under all circumstances followed the self-appointed leaders of the Radical



party through all the devious and uncertain wanderings of their policy. How cruelly unjust and absurd would be such an attempt in the case of Mr. Cowen, a few facts connected with his early career will satisfactorily prove.

Let us see, then, what has been the course of the man who is now held up to public contempt by a narrow clique of disappointed politicians and mendacious scribblers as the enemy of freedom and the friend of the oppressor. I believe that when some simple facts connected with Mr. Cowen's career have been recalled to the memory of the public, we shall hear no more even from the most fanatical of his critics of his 'sympathy' with tyrants or tyranny in any part of the world.

It was so far back as the time when Sir James Graham was disgracing himself by tampering with the letters of Mazzini, that


Mr. Cowen, then a young student at Edinburgh University and President of a College Debating Society, began to take an interest in the cause of European freedom. It was the vigour and eloquence with which he denounced Sir James Graham that secured for him the personal friendship of Mazzini, a man who is acknowledged by all who were brought in contact with him to have been one of the most remarkable and illustrious personages of our century. The great Italian exercised over Mr. Cowen that influence which was potent over so many other men, and the young Tyneside manufacturer was drawn by him into that great network of effort for the liberation of Europe which had its ramifications all over the Continent from 1848 to 1870.

Mr. Cowen, by his abilities and his position, was able to render essential service

to the party of freedom, which was agitating everywhere, and conspiring whenever necessary, against the despotisms of Russia, Prussia, Austria, Italy, and France. He started a private printing-press of his own, to which constant employment was given in the publication of the revolutionary manifestoes of the banished patriots of these countries. He acted as agent for Polish, Hungarian, Italian, and French Liberals, in forwarding their correspondence and their proclamations to their respective countries. He gave them for months at a time the hospitality of his modest home at Blaydon; he furnished them with funds for more than one of their daring expeditions; and he was unceasing in his public advocacy of the cause of the oppressed nationalities which they represented.

A mere list of those whom he thus aided actively, at a time when most Eng-

lish Liberals had but a languid sympathy with the sufferers by Continental tyranny, and before even Mr. Gladstone had struck his noble blow on behalf of the two Sicilies, would be too long to be given here. But such a list would include the names of Mazzini, of Garibaldi, of Orsini—the high-souled but morbid patriot whose criminal act in Paris had so much influence upon the destinies of Italy—of Worcell, Darasz, Langiewicz, and Mierslawski, the Polish patriotic leaders; of Herzen and Bakowin, the Russian Liberals; of Kossuth, Ledru Rollin, Louis Blanc, Riberolles, and many others. And it is the man who has spent his life as the associate of these great ‘conspirators’—the heroes of nearly all the great battles for freedom of our time—the man who aided them with pen, and tongue, and purse, as well as with all his native shrewdness and energy, for nearly thirty



years, who is now accounted the friend and supporter of European despotism ! Such at least was not the opinion held of him in those days when French spies dogged his footsteps in his own town of Newcastle, and when the police not merely of Russia, but of Germany, Austria, France, and all parts of Italy save Sardinia, were instructed to arrest him if he should ever venture to set foot within their jurisdiction. We have short memories now-a-days ; but surely of all the strange freaks of popular ignorance and prejudice, there is none stranger or more discreditable than that Joseph Cowen should be accounted the friend of the tyrant and the enemy of the oppressed.

Some day the world will probably know the whole romantic history of the man who has been more closely associated than any other Englishman of his time with the great work of liberation which has transformed

Europe everywhere outside the limits of the Russian Empire; and which has given to our fellow-creatures in the great Continental States those common rights of humanity to which thirty years ago they were to a large extent strangers. When that history is made known, the slanders of to-day will assuredly bring the blush of shame to the cheeks of their authors. In the meantime, even such a sketch as this, brief and imperfect as it necessarily is, may disabuse some people of the idea that a man who is not an absolute believer in the virtues of the Russian diplomatist must necessarily be the sworn foe of human freedom.

There is one other mistake about Mr Cowen which I think it right to correct. It seems to be generally believed that Lord Beaconsfield, following in the footsteps of Mazzini, has exercised some strange but potent influence over him, and has succeeded

in drawing him away from his allegiance to that Liberal party of which throughout his whole life he has been one of the most advanced members. The idea is too preposterous to be seriously treated; but I may at least be permitted to say that Mr. Cowen has never in the course of his life had any intercourse of any kind whatever with the present Prime Minister, either by letter or word of mouth, and that he is now, as he always has been, the strenuous opponent of that 'showy Orientalism' which is the leading characteristic of Lord Beaconsfield's policy.

As for the future, those who know how modest, simple, and sincere Mr. Cowen is in his private life, and how entirely free from affectation he is in all his public acts, will probably cling to the hope that his claims to high official rank will not be lost sight of amid the clamour of the noisy herd

of office-seekers. All who are acquainted with the way in which Mr. Cowen has worked in public affairs in his own district, all who know anything of his distinguished abilities as an administrator, will feel that the Government which included him among its members would have reason to esteem itself fortunate. It will be curious to observe, when the next Liberal Ministry is formed, whether the merits of Mr. Cowen or the clamour of his self-interested detractors will have most weight with the leaders of his party:

MR. BRIGHT.

[THE Right Hon. JOHN BRIGHT was born at Rochdale, in 1811, and married, first, Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. Jonathan Priestman, of Newcastle-on-Tyne ; and secondly, Margaret, daughter of Mr. William Leatham, of Wakefield. He is a partner in the cotton-spinning firm of John Bright & Brothers, Rochdale. Elected for Durham July 1843, and became member for Manchester in July 1847. Unsuccessfully contested that city in April 1857 ; and has sat for Birmingham since August of the same year. Was President of the Board of Trade from December 1868 to December 1870, and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from October 1873 till February 1874.]

M R. B R I G H T.



I N the noble hall of the Reform Club, on any afternoon during the session of Parliament, there may generally be seen a figure which is certain to attract attention even on the part of the stranger. It is that of a man of middle height, bowed not so much with age as with work and trial, on whose thickset shoulders there is poised a massive head, the pure white locks of which are scantier now than of yore. The lines of the figure itself are sufficiently characteristic to deserve notice, even from the chance passer-by ; but when the face, with

its marked features, clear but tender eyes, and clean-chiseled mobile lips, are seen, no one can doubt that this sturdy Englishman, who has passed the prime of manhood, and upon whom the weight of years and of labours manifold have begun to tell so heavily, is no ordinary person.

To every one in the Reform Club, nay, to most people acquainted with the streets of the West End, the face and the figure of John Bright are sufficiently familiar. But to those who do not know the great orator-statesman, to those who have never heard him as he thrilled the House of Commons with his stately speech, or played upon the sympathies of a great assemblage of his fellow-countrymen, like the skilful musician who draws a hundred different tones and harmonies from the strings of the harp ; to those, in short, to whom the name of John Bright is a name and nothing more, I should

like to offer one word of counsel. Go and look upon him once before he passes from the world ; go and take your children with you, so that when at last age has overtaken them, and they recount to their own children's children their memories of a bygone time, they may be able to say something of the outward aspect of the greatest of popular leaders, the man whose name is associated with so many of the grandest movements of our century, and whose genius and virtues must for ever adorn one of the brightest pages of our history !

The flames of life which once burnt so brightly, one might almost say so fiercely, in the breast of John Bright, have now died down into the serene and mellow glow of an autumn sunset. There are few traces about the man of the heat and the passion and the perfervid enthusiasm which twenty years ago were such important factors in

our English politics. Mr. Bright has ceased to be the foremost warrior in the field ; he is no longer to be found wherever the fight is the thickest, exulting in the tempestuous passions of the battle.

The privileges of age have come to him along with its disadvantages ; and the man who was once the most ardent political controversialist of his time, the man who was ready to assail, single-handed, the strongest fortress of class interest or public corruption that his keen eyes could discover, the man who never hesitated to measure swords with the most powerful of the Parliamentary giants of the great Reform era, is now to no small extent a mere spectator of the fight, with his heart still in the right place, it is true, but with his sword in his sheath, and the armour he once bore so stoutly laid aside. To most men there comes with the advance of years this release from the burden

of the strife ; but to few men can it come more happily than it has done to Mr. Bright. He rests from his labours ; but in very truth, his works do follow him.

No man in England, perhaps no man living, can look back upon so many hard battles which have ended in complete and permanent victory. The repose now is perfect. It can only be likened to that wondrous period of triumphant calm which the Duke of Wellington enjoyed after he had fought the last of his hundred fights, and secured not for England only, but for a whole continent, forty years of peace and safety. Yet, just as in those old days one could never look at the great Duke, as he rode slowly down Constitution-Hill on his way from Apsley House to the Horse Guards, without seeing in the feeble old gentleman, who swayed from side to side as he sat in his saddle, the lion-hearted victor of Torres

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Vedras, of Badajos, of Salamanca, and of Waterloo; so now I never rub shoulders with John Bright, in street or club or lobby, without thinking of all the great fights of which he has been the hero and the conquerer. And, to my mind, names more glorious even than those of the great fields of battle I have just mentioned, may be enumerated as John Bright's patents of nobility. Free trade, political reform, justice to Ireland, good government in India, an unfettered press, an alliance with our kinsmen beyond the sea, and peace with all the world,—these are the causes of which John Bright has been in his day and generation the foremost champion, these are the fields in which he has won the splendid laurels which encircle his brows.

It would be nothing short of an impertinence to recount here the facts of his political history. What Englishman is there

who does not know the part he has taken in all the great controversies of our time? No career more simple, consistent, free from all taint of self-seeking, all suspicion of insincerity or double-dealing, is upon record, even in the singularly pure annals of English statesmanship. The man who went forth at the bidding of Richard Cobden, from the chamber of mourning and desolation, to win bread for the suffering poor of his native land, and to overthrow the giant monopoly which was overshadowing its social and political institutions, has been true to himself during his whole career.

From first to last he has been the friend of the common people, the champion of the oppressed and sorrowful of every clime. He had fought with a courage and resolution which no words could exaggerate on behalf of the overtaxed working men of England. What wonder, then, that he should throw his

whole heart and soul into the battle on behalf of the slaves of the United States; or that he should, by sheer dint of his own genius and strength, stand as it were in the gap between the Northern States and the English people, receiving in his own broad bosom all the shafts of malice, sarcasm, and envy which were aimed at those whom he protected? And could the man who had thus drawn the sword and fought almost single-handed for a people whose cause was both despised and misunderstood, do less when almost at his own doors a nation sent up its bitter cry of remonstrance against the wrong of which it was the victim? Was it possible for the sturdy champion of the rights of the negro to be altogether insensible to the grievances of the Irish peasant?

John Bright never fought more courageously, never brought a nobler eloquence to the service of the cause he advocated, than

when he stood forth to plead for a people whose miseries were in part at least the work of our own laws and institutions, but for whose sufferings the English Government had at that time apparently no remedy to offer save the scaffold, the convict prison, and the emigrant ship. Follow the record through all its details, and you will find that the story is the same. The man who believed that war was a crime, was never afraid to say so, even when the sword had been actually drawn, and the nation as one man was clamouring for blood. The man who did not believe that the law of morality or the teachings of the Gospel had a limited geographical application, was as ready to protest against oppression when wrought by English officials in India or Jamaica, as when it was the work of a Southern planter or a Turkish Pasha. This is the noble record of John Bright's public career. It might be

amplified to an almost illimitable extent. But what good purpose would be served by such amplification, when the whole story may be summed up in a single line, and like King Arthur, he can be described as one 'who went about redressing human wrong?'

It is impossible to forget that Mr. Bright's brilliant and wonderful successes in that great work of reform and improvement to which he has devoted himself, could never have been what they are but for his possession of the splendid gift of eloquence. As an orator, John Bright in his prime was undoubtedly the greatest of English speakers. He had not the matchless debating powers of Mr. Gladstone; nor could he boast of that mastery of controversial fence which distinguishes the present Prime Minister. But in the great art of clothing noble sentiments in the fittest and simplest words, in the power of breathing forth the

deepest and finest emotions of the soul through the medium of public speech, in the ability to touch and sway and captivate all who are brought within the reach of his eloquence, Mr. Bright stands absolutely unapproached among the speakers of our time.

I should like to pause here, if it were possible, in order to say something of the manner of his oratory. To scores of thousands of Englishmen it must be familiar; but millions necessarily know it only by report. Such persons can hardly realise all that is implied in those words—a speech by Mr. Bright. They have never, as Pitt said of Fox, been ‘under the wand of the magician.’ They have never listened with eager ear to those words spoken so slowly, quietly, unostentatiously, that formed the invariable prelude to those grand outbursts of verbal harmony which thrilled through

the crowded assemblage like the blast of a mighty chorus in which the voices of a thousand men were blent into one noble and overpowering strain. They have not known what it was to be moved to scorn, to tender pity, to laughter, or to indignation, as the great orator spoke. They have never, in short, drunk in that eloquence of which no other living Englishman furnishes an example; and all mere words of description would utterly fail to convey to them a true idea of the thing itself.

I can call to mind many occasions on which I have heard Mr. Bright's oratory to the greatest advantage; but I shall only mention one instance, because it was one of his latest appearances in public, and because also it has a special interest in consequence of its personal connection with his own career. I refer to the most touching and exquisite speech delivered by him at the Bradford

Exchange on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of Richard Cobden. Who that was present can ever forget that most beautiful tribute to the memory of a loved and lamented friend? Who could fail to be impressed by the wonderful sight which was presented when that great company of men was seen struggling under the influence of deep and strong emotion, as the orator, with that highest of all arts which we call genius, told the story of his own great grief, of his summons to the side of Cobden, and of the work which they were permitted to do together? Often as I had heard John Bright speak previously, I remember no occasion on which the more refined qualities of his eloquence showed to greater advantage than they did in this speech. It was a unique and splendid elegy upon a great man's memory.

It must be admitted that the occasional

displays of bitterness and of a vehemence out of proportion to the causes which provoked it, by which Mr. Bright has at times been distinguished when engaged in great political controversies, would have been more strongly rebuked by public opinion if it had not been for the irresistible charm of his eloquence. Probably no other man would have been allowed the freedom of speech which he has always exercised. But, on the other hand, it must be said that few public men have proved more conclusively than he has done that they were guided solely by great principles, and the worthiest of motives in all their acts. Mr. Bright may sometimes have struck hard; nay, in the heat of the battle he may even have seemed to some to strike unfairly; but he never yet struck in a dishonest cause or for an unworthy object. Mistakes he has made like the rest of us; but when has he

been chargeable with having allowed sordid views, selfish motives, or petty and ignoble instincts to affect his conduct? Is it not notorious that in all that he has done in the service of the public, he has been guided by his pity for the suffering, his indignation against the wrong-doer, his yearning eagerness for the coming in of the reign of peace and righteousness?

In that noble speech on Richard Cobden to which I have alluded, he used some words which seem to me to be not less closely applicable to himself than to the illustrious man of whom he spoke.

‘Before the funeral party left the house,’ said he, ‘I was leaning on the coffin with his daughter, and she said, “My father used to like me very much to read the Sermon on the Mount to him.” His own life was to a large extent—I speak it with deference and with hesitation—a sermon

based upon that best and greatest of all sermons. It was a life of perpetual self-sacrifice.' And surely it is not irreverent or extravagant to say, that upon the head of Mr. Bright now rest those blessings which are promised in the same sermon to the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, and who are persecuted for its sake. It has been the great object of his life, if I may use a striking phrase of his own, to 'put Holy Writ into an Act of Parliament;' and though the great field in which he worked is still white with the harvest, whilst the labourers are few and too often faint of heart, he has the supreme satisfaction of knowing, that in the task to which he set his own hand, he has not been unsuccessful or unrewarded, and that the world to-day, above all this English world of ours, is some-

what better, and purer, and happier, and a little nearer to the reign of righteousness and truth than it would have been if he had never lived and laboured.

The great man, as I have said, is no longer to be found in the thick of the fight: it is the eventide of life with him, and the blessing of peace is his. He may still, indeed, be ready at the call of duty to buckle on his armour once more, and to press into the midst of the battle; and probably he himself would be loth to admit that he had passed out of the ranks of active combatants. But those who remember his splendid career of pure and self-sacrificing effort, those who know his genius and his moral worth, will not wonder at the fact that among English statesmen of to-day there is not one who holds a prouder position, not one who receives more general and

heartfelt recognition from the good men of all parties, than the great Quaker orator, whose highest claim to honour and fame is to be found in the fact that he was through long years the despised and hated advocate of the forlorn, the friendless, and the forgotten.

LORD DERBY.

VOL. I.

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[THE Right Hon. EDWARD HENRY STANLEY, fifteenth Earl of Derby, was born in 1826. Educated at Rugby and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took a first class in classics in 1848. Visited Canada and the United States after leaving college, and in 1851-2 visited India. Elected for Lynn Regis during his absence in America in 1849, and sat for it till the death of his father, in 1869. Appointed Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in March 1852; Secretary of State for India, 1858-9; Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1866-7; re-appointed, 1874; resigned, 1878. Was twice offered a seat in Liberal Cabinets by Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell. Married the Dowager-Marchioness of Salisbury.]

LORD DERBY.

IT is now nearly three years since the Liberals of England met in one of the greatest 'conventions' of our times to discuss the Eastern Question at what was popularly known as the St. James's Hall Conference. Probably no more united or enthusiastic meeting was ever held within the limits of Great Britain. The passionate indignation which had been excited a few months earlier by the full revelation of the atrocious crimes of the Turks in Roumelia, and by the publication of Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet on the 'Bulgarian Horrors,'

had not yet had time to subside ; a great part of the nation believed that Her Majesty's Ministers were disposed to view the offences of the Turkish Government leniently, and the influential politicians who took part in this convention were fully impressed with the idea that a strong utterance on their part was necessary in order to save their country from being involved in the shame and degradation of an active alliance with the Sultan. No bounds were set by the speakers to their indignant denunciations of Ministers who were believed to be capable of dragging the flag of England through the bloody mire of Batak ; and those who listened were as full of heat and passion as were those who spoke. One man only ventured to utter a word, not of dissent, but of qualification, in the midst of the sweeping censures that were being poured forth. It was Lord Shaftesbury, the illustrious philan-

thropist, who has conferred a new title to honour and respect upon the English nobility, who was courageous enough to take this course. The venerable Earl, who presided over the meeting, took occasion to remark that possibly Lord Derby, then Foreign Secretary, was not deserving of all the hard and bitter things which had been said of him. A shout of disapprobation burst from a thousand throats at the suggestion. It was in vain that the apologist for the Foreign Secretary tried to make himself heard. Those were not times in which the British public was inclined to listen to the voice of reason, when it ran counter to that full tide of feeling on which the nation was being borne along. The apology for Lord Derby was drowned in the roar of the multitude, and, like the rest of the Queen's Ministers—always excepting the popular favourite of the hour, Lord

Salisbury—he was loaded with the exonerations of the St. James's Hall Conference.

Those who reflected upon what the people of England, up to that hour, had thought of Lord Derby, must have been struck by the change of opinion which this incident evidenced. During nearly the whole of a public life, which had not been a short one, Lord Derby had occupied an exceptional position in the regard of his fellow-countrymen. He had been the most striking specimen of all that great class of statesmen who, without deserving to be stigmatised as 'trimmers,' have yet been the recipients of the confidence of both political parties. So far back as 1855, he had been pressed to take the Colonial Office by Lord Palmerston, after the death of Sir William Molesworth; and ten years later, when Lord Russell became Premier in succession to Lord Palmerston, he had offered a seat in his Cabinet to him.

Still more recently, when Lord Derby first became Secretary for Foreign Affairs, it had been said by one of his Liberal critics that if all England were polled there would be a unanimous vote in favour of his retaining that office for life. These marks of favour on the part of his political opponents had been secured by the eminent fairness, discretion, and good sense which Lord Derby had shown in public affairs. He was seen to be a man singularly devoid of prejudices, whether personal, political, or social ; a man who was willing to treat even party questions and *a fortiori* all questions not of a strictly party character, upon their merits ; a man who had the judicial instinct strongly developed, and who was consequently blessed with a rare faculty for seeing both sides of the shield. Added to this, it must be said that upon most social questions his liberality, I might almost say his 'Liberalism, had been

pronounced. I do not suppose that any speech of his in favour of any act of religious intolerance, social tyranny, or commercial injustice could be brought to light if *Hansard* were ransacked for all the years during which he has been in Parliament. That he was essentially a moderate man, endowed with a large amount of clear common sense and practical sagacity, was the popular belief down to 1876. Yet this was the man on whose behalf Lord Shaftesbury pleaded in vain before the great gathering in St. James's Hall! The Eastern Question has exercised so marked an influence, not merely over Lord Derby's career, but over the position which he holds in the esteem of both political parties, that I may be forgiven if, in writing of him now, I consider almost exclusively his connection with that question.

How came it that the man whose fitness

for the great office of Foreign Secretary had been universally recognised in 1874, should two years later have incurred the bitter anger of the majority of his fellow-countrymen, and should have come to be regarded as the unblushing and unscrupulous advocate of a Power whose very name was synonymous with rapine and bloodshed? The answer to this question may be given in a single sentence. It was not because he had apologised for the hideous crimes of Batak and Tatar-Bazardjik, or had failed to bring strong moral pressure to bear upon the Porte, that Lord Derby had become the object of bitter suspicion and dislike. As a matter of fact he had taken neither of these courses. He had never apologised for the Bulgarian atrocities, and he *had* spoken of them—in a memorable despatch—in language which Mr. Gladstone himself declared to be worthy of the occasion.

None therefore but the ignorant or the fanatical could pretend that Lord Derby was in any sense whatever in sympathy with the crimes of the Porte. The one offence with which he was justly chargeable was that of having rejected the Berlin Memorandum.

I am not going to re-open the whole Eastern Question in this sketch of the nobleman who had the misfortune to be Foreign Secretary during the most exciting and critical phases of that question ; but as a matter of common justice to him, I think I may examine his dealings with it as far as possible from his own point of view. Fortunately there are ample means of doing this in the voluminous despatches of which he was the author.

When, therefore, I say that Lord Derby's offence in the eyes of English Liberals was his refusal to agree to the Berlin Memor-

andum drawn up by the three Emperors, or rather the three Chancellors, in May 1876, I may go further, and say that he was evidently not without reasons for taking this course. No one can read the despatches he wrote at this time without seeing that Lord Derby was fully impressed with the belief that there was, I will not say a plot, but, at any rate, a secret understanding between the three Emperors with regard to Turkey. And even the superficial outsider who had not access to those sources of information which Lord Derby could command, might have been forgiven if he came to a similar conclusion.


The manner in which the three Emperors piled up one proposition upon another for the consideration of the wretched Sultan, offering him a fresh series of suggestions before ever he had time to digest those which had preceded them, whilst the evil

genius of Abdul Aziz, the Russian General Ignatieff, was all the time acting as the practical director of the internal government of Turkey, must, I think, suggest even to the most unprejudiced of men that the Triple Alliance was bent upon pursuing some secret purposes of its own. Lord Derby, at any rate, saw clearly that Turkey was in part being lured, and was in part marching voluntarily, to its ruin ; and it is evident that he had no faith either in the real intentions or the public professions of the three Empires. When, therefore, having privately arranged a scheme of their own which must inevitably put an end to the independence of Turkey, the Emperors invited England, by telegram, to make herself a party, on an hour's notice, to the scheme, he refused to listen to the proposal, and thus put an end to 'the concert of Europe' for the subjugation of the Porte.

Up to the meeting of the St. James's Hall Conference this alone was his offence in the eyes of the anti-Turkish party. In other words, he had refused to support Russia, Germany, and Austria in a course which he believed would lead, and was intended to lead, to a bloody and ruthless war and to the partition of Turkey. But that he was not opposed on principle to the concert of Europe, was proved a few weeks after the meeting at St. James's Hall, when it was seen not only that Lord Salisbury was acting in harmony with the representatives of the other Powers at Constantinople, and notably with General Ignatieff, but that under Lord Derby's directions he was using the most strenuous language in order to induce the Porte to yield to the wishes of Europe.

Most Liberals believe, it is true, that at this time, when Lord Derby was showing

that he had no objection to a real European concert, however strongly he might object to a sham one intended to cover the designs of the Triple Alliance, there was some secret influence at work in the Cabinet, counter-acting its open policy and giving direct encouragement to Turkey. But if that be so, subsequent events, I think, have proved that it was not Lord Derby who was exercising that influence. He was not prepared to fight against the Turks; but he was clearly not prepared to fight in their favour. He warned them, as the Blue Books show, of the certain consequences of their crimes and follies; but I am inclined to think that he looked forward to war between Russia and them as inevitable, and that he was therefore more anxious to prevent that war from spreading when it did break out than to make fruitless efforts to avert it.



If this was his idea, we know that it was correct. War did come, after the close of the Conference and the brilliant collapse of Lord Salisbury's amateurish attempts at diplomacy. We know moreover now, from the lips of the Prime Minister himself, that there was one man in the Cabinet, to wit Lord Beaconsfield, who wished England to intervene in that war at the very outset. During the terrible twelve months from the close of the Constantinople Conference to the conclusion of the Treaty of San Stefano, it was Lord Derby's lot to have to stand between two extreme sections of the English people, and to steer the ship straight through directly conflicting currents. On the one hand, he was believed by many Englishmen to be wishful to bring us into the war raging between Russia and Turkey, and these people were constantly exercising pressure upon him to force him, as they thought,

to a more pacific policy than that on which he was bent. On the other hand, he had to oppose a powerful party, at the head of which was the Prime Minister himself, who actually did uphold the policy falsely attributed to Lord Derby, and who were anxious upon any pretext to plunge the country into war.

Will even those who are most strongly prejudiced against Lord Derby deny that the position in which he was thus placed was one of extraordinary, almost of unparalleled, difficulty? Neither political party, I am afraid, can pretend that it showed much generosity towards the man who was thus left to bear the burden of our foreign policy, in the gravest crisis the present generation has known, not only without assistance, but with the additional embarrassment of a divided Cabinet, and a nation which did not know its own mind. When the secret

history of that time is written, I believe it will be found that Lord Derby was the victim of grievous injustice, not merely on the part of his colleagues, but upon the part of all classes in the country.

We know what the end of the struggle was. A time came when the excitement in England was raised to fever-height by the approach of the Russian armies to Constantinople, and the equivocation and concealment practised by the Russian Government. Lord Derby did all that he could to dissuade the Czar from sending his army to Stamboul, but he did not believe that a mere military entry into the Turkish capital by the Russians ought to be made a *casus belli* by England. He declined, therefore, to be a party to anything like a policy of menace on our part, so long as the interests for the preservation of which we had expressly stipulated at the outset of the struggle were

respected. But by this time the war-fever had risen to a great height in England.

Lord Beaconsfield saw that the nation had come round to the policy which he had all along favoured, and of which Lord Derby had throughout been the strenuous opponent, and supported by a majority of his Cabinet, he resolved to take measures which seemed to point to an immediate outbreak of hostilities between this country and Russia. As long as he could, Lord Derby remained in office, struggling against the rising Chauvinism in the Cabinet, and at the same time striving to keep Russia true to her pledges to England ; but the feeling both of his colleagues and of the public proved too strong for him in the end, and when it was announced that the Reserves were to be called out, that a military expedition of seventy thousand men was to be prepared, and that Indian troops were to

be brought to Europe, the Foreign Secretary quitted his office, and relinquished all connection with the Cabinet.

Few men can have forgotten the good taste, the good feeling, and the dignity of the speech in which the noble Earl announced the reasons for his resignation. Nor can any one fail to remember in what a spirit he was assailed a few days after by the statesman who had succeeded him at the Foreign Office, and who lavished upon him invective so bitter that it might have been supposed that Lord Derby was a traitor who had sold his country to serve his own ends, rather than a patriot who had sacrificed himself and his prospects upon the altar of duty. Yet I believe that when the full truth is known to the English people, it will be in the latter character that Lord Derby will appear in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen. And even now .

some measure of justice is being done to him. The charges of sympathy with Turkish tyranny and corruption, of indifference to the cruelties of the Pashas, and of an active desire to plunge England into war, have long since been most effectually disposed of. The minor charge of vacillation, which has been so frequently urged against him, may be as easily met. On the 6th of May 1877, Lord Derby, in a despatch to Count Schouvaloff, stated clearly the 'interests' which England had at stake during the war between Russia and Turkey, and which she required both belligerents to respect as a condition of her neutrality. There is no need to enumerate those interests here; but it may be said, shortly, that both political parties in this country were agreed as to the wisdom and justice of the conditions laid down in that despatch. I believe that this document furnishes the

real key to Lord Derby's policy during the war; and that he never in any degree changed his views or altered his course. War having broken out, his object was to keep England free from entanglement in a most fatal and ruinous contest, upon certain clearly-defined conditions; and in this great object he succeeded. He *did* keep England out of war; and English interests (as defined by him) *were* respected. It can hardly be said, therefore, that there was either vacillation or failure in his policy, such as it was.

It has been absolutely necessary in writing a sketch of Lord Derby to dwell almost exclusively upon these recent complications, because, as I have already said, his position in the country has been most seriously affected by them. His Eastern policy, misunderstood in the first place by the Liberals, who conceived that he was a secret advocate

of war, had led to his being deposed from his remarkable position as the favourite of his political opponents as well as of his political friends. In the next place, his firmness in refusing to yield to the war-clamour had led to his being driven from office, followed by the angry abuse of those who heaped upon him charges of vacillation, timidity, and weakness. Accusations so contradictory as these might almost be left to answer each other. The time, one may rest assured, is not far distant when the clear judgment, the patient intelligence, the sagacity, the moderation, and the eminent fairness of Lord Derby will again be secured to the service of the public. Probably he himself does not know under what conditions of party, or in what manner, he will next take a leading part in political affairs. But that such a part awaits him may be predicted with some-

thing like certainty. The reign of political charlatanry is, fortunately, never a very long one, and the nation in its sober mood will never allow Lord Derby, in the prime of his manhood, and the full vigour of his intellect, to retire altogether from the work for which he is so admirably fitted. But, in the meantime, it would be well if those who have been inclined to blame him for his part in the great complications of the last three years, should at least try to get rid of prejudiced and unfounded notions as to what that part has been, and should learn to do credit to the laboriousness, the consistency, and the courage with which, in the severest political storm of our times, Lord Derby performed the heavy task which an unkind fortune had allotted to him.

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SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT.

[SIR WILLIAM GEORGE GRANVILLE VENABLES VERNON-HARCOURT is the younger son of the late Rev. William Harcourt of Nuneham Park, Oxford. He was born in 1827, and was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. Married, first, in 1859, Therèse Lister ; second, in 1876, Mrs. Elizabeth Ives, a daughter of Mr. Motley, the historian. Has sat for the city of Oxford since November 1868. Was Solicitor-General from November 1873 until February 1874. Is Professor of International Law in the University of Cambridge, and author of the 'Letters of Historicus' on International Law.]

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT.

A FEW years ago the indefatigable London correspondent of the provincial Press was never weary of telling a story, which, though it was certainly untrue, had the unquestionable merit of being particularly spiteful. The story was to the effect that four friends made a novel wager. They were to dine together on a certain day, and each was to invite to the dinner the most disagreeable man he knew, the wager to be won by the man whose guest was by common admission *the* most disagreeable person in this strange company. On the

appointed day the four friends met at the place of entertainment, and presently a waiter solemnly ushered in—Sir William Harcourt. All the four hosts stepped forward to receive him, for each had picked him out as the most disagreeable person of his acquaintance! The story is a ridiculous libel upon Sir William Harcourt in his private and social character, and I am convinced that it owes its origin to somebody who has never had the pleasure of knowing personally one of the most charming wits and *raconteurs* of English society. But it cannot be denied that in his public and political capacity Sir William Harcourt has done something to lay himself open to this rather pointed jest. In spite of his very apparent cleverness, his spirit, his dash, his readiness in repartee, and the fluency which almost reaches the level of eloquence, it cannot be doubted that the learned Member

for Oxford is not popular as a politician. Ambitious as he is, brilliant as he is, rich in political lore as he unquestionably is, he lacks the one thing needed to make him a real power in the House of Commons—he has not, apparently, the remotest conception of the art of conciliating his political friends.

It is a far cry now to the days when one 'Historicus' was writing learned letters in the *Times* on the subject of our relations with the United States, and the obligations imposed upon us, in the matter of the Confederate privateers, by international law. Probably comparatively few of my readers could now tell me what view 'Historicus,' to whom the *Times* was always so willing to give a prominent place and large type, took upon these vexed questions. Yet none the less was this gentleman a power in his day. Fierce was the controversy raised over his singularly clear and forcible exposition of the

mysteries of international jurisprudence, and warm were the compliments showered upon him by all the authorities, from the Lord Chief-Justice downwards. The country in a muddle-headed kind of way had come—as it generally does—to the conclusion that it was quite right in all that it was doing; but it had not the wit to discover, still less to state, the reasons for this consciousness of its own rectitude. It was all the more grateful, therefore, to this mysterious personage, this voice from the clouds, or from the chair of the philosopher, that put its secret sentiments into such excellent English, and showed so conclusively that those sentiments were absolutely beyond reproach. For a time, as rumours went circling about in society on the subject of these letters, an impression prevailed that a new ‘Junius’ had crept into the world. But ‘Historicus’ was no ‘Junius;’ his real model was to be found in another

correspondent of the *Times*, one 'Runnymede,' who between the Thirties and Forties was in the habit of posing in the leading journal as an authority on Constitutional questions, and who has since lived to take more liberties with the Constitution than any other statesman of our time.

Like Mr. Benjamin Disraeli, Mr. William Vernon Harcourt was not one who believed that lights were intended to be hidden beneath bushels; and when the world had once acknowledged that 'Historicus' was a decided success, it was not long in discovering who its mentor was. The 'blushing aspirant' to fame as a sagacious and thoughtful political leader was already well known at the Bar and in society, and within his own circle had made a reputation as a wit and a scholar. The world outside knew little or nothing of him, however, beyond what it learned from the letters of 'Historicus,' and accordingly

for a time it regarded him with that kind of interest and curiosity which is always excited by the unknown.

Presently the usual rumours began to circulate. Mr. Vernon Harcourt was anxious to obtain Parliamentary honours ; and of course a man who had distinguished himself as he had done, who had furnished the *Times* with the theme of a hundred leading articles, who had been complimented by the Lord Chief-Justice, quoted in Parliament, and abused by rival jurists, was eminently qualified to enter public life. The question generally asked at that time was as to which of the two political parties Mr. Harcourt proposed to honour with his support. I do not think there ought ever to have been any doubt upon this point. Not, indeed, that even Mr. Harcourt's most intimate friends could have spoken with confidence regarding the exact colour of his political

opinions. But those were days when most clever young men who were anxious to get on in the world, and eager for a career, turned their eyes in one direction only. The star of Liberalism was in the ascendant; the Conservative reaction was undreamt of; nobody but Mr. Disraeli believed that the germs of Toryism and Jingoism were hidden in that seething mass of the *residuum* which he was bent upon enfranchising. What more natural then, what, indeed, more inevitable, than that young Mr. Vernon Harcourt on abandoning the Parliamentary Bar in order to take up politics as his profession, should have turned his eyes towards the Liberal party and the great leader who was then just beginning to take his proper position at the head of the most powerful political organisation in the country?

Thus it happened that when, in December 1868, Mr. Gladstone came into power as


chief of an Administration which was destined to do more for the reform of English institutions and the amelioration of the condition of the poor than any other Government of our time, he had the happiness to count Mr. William Vernon Harcourt among his supporters. Nor was it long before the Member for Oxford gave the House of Commons a 'taste of his quality.'

Somebody had proposed the abrogation of the Statute of Queen Anne, which requires that Ministers, when they take office under the Crown, should vacate their seats and go through the process of another election. Here was an opportunity of which the eminent 'Historicus' was not slow to avail himself! Touch the Statute of Queen Anne! Lay violent hands upon the very Ark of the Covenant! Horrible! Sacrilegious! But ye do err, not knowing what ye do! This was the fashion in which the

young champion of the British Constitution did battle against the assailants of the Statute of Queen Anne. I was one of the fortunate persons who listened to that remarkable maiden speech. Mr. Harcourt evidently looked upon himself as an inspired instructor of Parliament, whom Providence in its wisdom had sent into that august assemblage for the purpose of making war upon all blockheads. The ponderous learning which he brought to bear upon the unfortunate being who had innocently proposed this particular innovation, was lightened by the dashing sarcasm of which the erstwhile contributor to the *Saturday Review* was a master ; and the whole was compounded into a palatable dish with that brilliant self-assurance which throughout his life has been the unfailing characteristic of Sir William Harcourt. The House laughed. It was evidently very much amused ; per-

haps it was not very much impressed ; but there could be no doubt that the new Member was resolved to speak boldly if at all in Parliament. So it came to pass that the Member for Oxford was set down as a gentleman who 'meant to win' in the noisy struggle for supremacy and the Treasury bench.

Time passed, and Mr. Harcourt made it very evident to the leader of his party that he did not intend to be a mere follower in the rank and file of the Liberal army. I do not mean to say that he was more clamorous for office than many other persons who might be named ; but office was unquestionably his end, and Mr. Gladstone was more than once allowed to see that the learned writer of the 'Historicus' letters could be a formidable opponent, as well as an earnest supporter. Moreover the House of Commons, like less distinguished assemblages, is very much in



the habit of taking a man at his own valuation ; and the dignified self-assertion which characterised Mr. Vernon Harcourt did not fail in the end to make an impression upon the people around him. So it came to be generally recognised that the member for Oxford was one of the men for whom something must be done on the earliest opportunity ; and one day when that gentleman had brought his fluency, his brisk repartee, his cheap learning, and his rough but effective satire to the service of the Premier, he was slyly complimented by Mr. Disraeli upon having made ‘a speech worthy of a Solicitor-General.’ The neat piece of satire proved to be prophetic, for a few months afterwards—in November 1873—Mr. Vernon Harcourt became Her Majesty’s Solicitor-General.

Then what a sight might have been witnessed, but for one untoward incident. Sir William Harcourt on the Treasury Bench

would have been a spectacle for gods and men. I should think no man ever enjoyed his elevation to that position so much as the Member for Oxford did; and I am quite certain that no man ever believed himself more worthy of the honour. Almost from the first moment of his appearance in the political arena, he had shown that mere legal preferment was not his aim. To enjoy the emoluments and the distinction of the Solicitorship might satisfy other men, but would not satisfy Sir William Harcourt. Convinced that he had in him the stuff of which great statesmen and administrators are made, he desired above all things to obtain political advancement, and to have the opportunity of proving that he could lead a party as well as make a slashing speech. There were then many who expected that even in the comparatively humble office of Solicitor-General he would strive to make

his mark as one of the foremost personages in the House, and his first appearance upon the Treasury Bench was awaited by those who knew him with not a little interest and curiosity.

Alas! however, a terrible event happened which dashed the cup of bliss from the lips of the Solicitor-General at the very moment when the first sip of the precious draught was being taken, and deprived the world of the spectacle which would have been presented by Sir William as a leading Member of the Government. Mr. Gladstone dissolved Parliament, and he was so rash and presumptuous as to take this step without in the first place consulting his Solicitor-General. That eminent personage, to his own intense disgust, found himself reduced once more to the rank of a private Member, before he had even figured once before the world as the member of a Ministry. Can


anybody wonder that his vexation and his indignation should have been great, or that at last it should have burst all the limits of self-control ?

To those who watched Sir William Harcourt at this time, it almost seemed as though he looked upon the sudden dissolution of 1874 as an event which had been studiously contrived by the Machiavellian Mr. Gladstone for the purpose of destroying the career of the formidable rival who had revealed himself in the person of 'Historicus.' The learned gentleman was not long in making his sentiments apparent to the world ; but in common justice it must be said that he did so in a somewhat clumsy fashion.

Mr. Disraeli had at that time become the ruling planet, towards which all rising young men anxious for a career were turning. The hopes of the Liberals had been cruelly

dashed, and despondent souls went hither and thither declaring that the once triumphant party was now doomed to forty years of exclusion from power. Sir William Harcourt noted all the signs of the times, and he made no insignificant contribution to them when he suddenly astonished the world by appearing before it as the unblushing flatterer of the Tory leader and Prime Minister. During that session of 1874 there were not many occasions on which the Member for Oxford lost any opportunity that presented itself for praising Mr. Disraeli, and insinuating comparisons between that gentleman and Mr. Gladstone, greatly to the disadvantage of the latter.

At last when his course had almost assumed the character of a scandal, and when he had even ventured to assume airs of offensive patronage and supercilious superiority towards the man to whom he was



indebted for his knighthood and his official rank, the patience of Mr. Gladstone failed, and in a never-to-be-forgotten speech he inflicted upon the ex-Solicitor-General a punishment so terrible in its severity, that most persons would have regarded it as merciless if they had not known how richly it was deserved. The lesson which was then administered to Sir William Harcourt has not been forgotten. He no longer abuses Mr. Gladstone—at all events, in public—and it may even be supposed that he acknowledges the melancholy fact that there is at least one man in Parliament who is his personal and intellectual superior. In other respects, however, he is unaltered. His belief in himself is still as firm, his contempt for those around him is still as great as ever. He still delights to make a ‘slashing’ speech, and to import into the political arena all that thoroughgoing advocacy which

is the characteristic of the profession of which he was once an ornament. And as a gentleman who makes a capital harangue in support of his brief, it must be said that he takes high, if not the highest, rank among Parliamentary debaters. There have from time to time been rumours that a change of front on the part of Sir William was not impossible. The Tory party in the House of Commons is sadly in want of a dashing leader, and there appears at present to be no probability of the want being supplied from its own ranks. Lord Beaconsfield is believed to have cast longing eyes at one time upon the bench upon which sits the Liberal ex-Solicitor-General. And it must be admitted that there ought to be a good deal of personal sympathy between the two men. But the negotiations, if they ever took place, had no result, and Sir William Harcourt continues to give to the

Opposition the benefits of his undoubted talents, his great facility in Parliamentary debate, his smartness in repartee, his creditable ambition, and his unqualified self-confidence.


MR. EDWARD JENKINS.

[MR. EDWARD JENKINS is the son of the Rev. John Jenkins, D.D., Minister of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Montreal. He was born in 1838, was educated at the M'Gill College, Montreal, and at the University of Pennsylvania. Married, in 1867, Hannah Matilda Johnston. Has sat for Dundee since February 1874. Acted as Agent-General for Canada from February 1874 till December 1875. Is the author of 'Ginx's Baby,' 'Lord Bantam,' 'Little Hodge,' etc.]

MR. EDWARD JENKINS.

TO what extent a literary man is qualified to succeed in the House of Commons is a point which has not yet, apparently, been satisfactorily determined. Parliament has welcomed many men of letters to its fold ; and some of them have risen to high positions in the esteem of the public and the service of the State ; but, taking the average result of the experiment of bringing an author into the House of Commons, it cannot be said to be very encouraging. Neither Hume nor John Stuart Mill made any real mark upon Parliament. Lytton

and Macaulay gained a certain success, by reason not of their literary but of their oratorical abilities ; and Lord Beaconsfield, though he is doubtless entitled to the appellation of a man of letters, always made literature subservient to the great purpose of his life—that of securing political advancement for himself. I think it may be safely said that if Thackeray or Dickens or Anthony Trollope had succeeded in winning seats in the House of Commons, they would have been among the conspicuous failures of that assemblage. The truth is, that the conditions of work and of success in the Parliamentary arena are altogether different from those which govern the literary world ; and few men who have gone through the long and painful apprenticeship which the author has usually to traverse before he attains eminence, can so far unlearn their own art as to acquire that other and very



dissimilar art by means of which alone they can make their mark in the House of Commons.

I do not propose to discuss the relative importance or value of literary and Parliamentary distinction. The subject is a tempting one, but it is too wide to admit of being dealt with here, and I must therefore leave authors and members of Parliament to their own opinions as to the comparative dignity and influence of their respective professions. But the fact remains that, as a rule, successful men of letters are not the most fortunate of politicians, and to this rule Mr. Edward Jenkins, the member for Dundee, forms no exception. Thanks in part to his own line of action, the public seems to some extent to have forgotten of late years that which after all is the best claim of Mr. Jenkins to distinction and respect. It has known him re-

cently chiefly, if not solely, as a very impulsive politician, who on many occasions has had the misfortune to find himself entirely out of sympathy with the House of Commons, and who, though inspired by the best motives in the world, has very often appeared to be the advocate of doctrines which most Englishmen heartily abhorred.

But Mr. Jenkins is something more than a politician, and it would be well if those who sneer at him in the House of Commons would bear in mind what, after all, are the principal achievements of his life. He is a man of letters of real power. Whatever may be his defects, no impartial critic will deny the truth of this statement. The man who wrote 'Ginx's Baby,' and 'Lord Bantam,' and 'Little Hodge,' is entitled to no mean place in English literature. He may be eccentric; he may often seem to be perverse; he may have made grave mistakes on many

occasions ; and yet no one can recall the three works I have mentioned without conceding to Mr. Jenkins the possession of rare and remarkable literary ability. He has, of course, written many other works besides those I have named, and some of them have attained even a wider popularity than that which 'Ginx's Baby,' his earliest satire, secured. But I think that it is by these three little books that he will hereafter be best remembered ; and I am inclined to place 'Little Hodge' first in the list. To deny the author of that sketch the possession of brilliant literary powers, merely because he has not yet gained any marked success in Parliament, would be as foolish as to deny that Burns possessed genius because his manners in society were not those of a polished gentleman. Mr. Jenkins, whatever may be said of him by his detractors, is an author of whom the English people may be proud, and

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who will probably be more highly esteemed by future generations than he is by the present.

It is, I have said, to a great extent his own fault that his character and achievements as a literary man have been so largely overlooked by the world. If Mr. Jenkins had remained out of Parliament, or if, being in Parliament, he had been satisfied with a very subordinate political position, I believe that his reputation would have stood far higher to-day than it actually does. He would not have been brought into collision with so many eager rivals; he would not have permitted the world to see his personal weaknesses so clearly, and he would not have offended our national foibles and prejudices so greatly as he has done. Men would not, in short, have been tempted to disparage his literary achievements because of his line of action in politics, and he would

have been generally recognised and respected as a brilliant and powerful writer and satirist. But Mr Jenkins has chosen—as he had a perfect right to do—to mark out for himself a political career on an ambitious scale, and he must not therefore complain if, in pursuing that career, he should meet with many hard blows and with some falls.

There is a story told against him which illustrates not unpleasantly certain features of his character that have been made very prominent since he came into Parliament. It is said that at the time when his connection with colonial questions made it necessary for him to be often in the lobby of the House of Commons, he had sometimes, like other men, to complain of being detained there for an unconscionable time, awaiting the good pleasure of the Members whom he was anxious to interview. On one occasion this detention had lasted so

long that his patience was exhausted, and he left, vowing that he would never return to the place until he did so as one who had a right to enter the House as well as the lobby,—a vow which he duly kept. Considering the great disadvantages under which Mr. Jenkins—who was born in India and educated in Canada—had to labour, in comparison with other young men, the resolution which he thus adopted was unquestionably a bold one. A man who was without aristocratic connections, or wealth, or even that close familiarity with English institutions which can only be acquired by those who are to the manner born, must have had a sufficient amount of self-confidence before he could register a vow such as that which fell from the lips of Mr. Jenkins. But courage and self-confidence, assisted by his real ability, enabled him to fulfil that vow, though not until he had

overcome more than one difficulty and met with more than one defeat. Apparently, he has formed a similar resolution with regard to his career in the House. He is not content to wait whilst other men go before him; he means to be heard, and heard at once. Ambition like this is not at all discreditable, especially when it is allied, as it undoubtedly is in his case, with genuine ability and considerable intelligence. But, as I have just said, those who form these heroic resolutions must be prepared to meet with many hard knocks whilst they are carrying them into effect, and they must not be altogether surprised if in the end they are unable to realise their hopes.

Mr. Jenkins has formed his own views as to the means by which success is to be secured in a Parliamentary career; and he is undoubtedly acting up to his theory with

undaunted courage and with remarkable perseverance and persistency. Most men would probably have been overwhelmed by the difficulties which faced them ; but there is no sign of discouragement, still less of despair, on the face of the Member for Dundee, when he rises to move some resolution which he is well aware the great majority of his fellow-Members regard with something more than mere disapproval. How the contest will end, it is impossible at present to say. Mr. Jenkins is still young, very young to have accomplished so much, and in the end he may succeed in realising the ambitious dreams of his youth, and like another eminent man of letters who was once shouted down in the House of Commons, may be able to compel the respect and attention of Parliament. But, on the other hand, it is evident that he might have won, not perhaps the posi-

tion which he covets, but certainly one of no mean rank, if he had been more anxious to conciliate his colleagues, and to pay heed to the prejudices and susceptibilities of the House. Every man, however, has the right to choose his own path. Mr. Jenkins has chosen his, and he is doubtless prepared to follow it to the end, whatever that end may be.

Those who are sometimes made angry by what appear to be the indiscretions of the Member for Dundee, those who resent his attempt to adopt the '*toujours de l'audace*' motto of the French revolutionary leader, ought at least to bear one fact in mind. It will be found, I think, that Mr. Jenkins in all his public actions is inspired by a real and most earnest sympathy with the suffering and the oppressed. In his writings he has consistently striven to advance the welfare or to draw attention to

the miseries of those classes that are most neglected and despised. The genuine pathos and tender feeling of 'Little Hodge,' for example, are not employed as the mere literary adornments of a tale; they are used to awaken public feeling on behalf of our peasant poor. And all through his career we see that Mr. Jenkins has been moved by impulses of real philanthropy. Even in those actions of his which have laid him open to the sharpest rebukes of the world, we see that his motives are thoroughly honourable and worthy. It is his judgment, not his heart, that is at fault in such cases. We may regret that he should be liable to these errors of judgment; but we cannot impugn his intentions.

Nor must his critics forget his readiness to allow himself to be convinced. Again and again during his political career, he has, like his own Lord Bantam in that last

inimitable chapter of the satire, 'changed his mind.' In other words, he has had that courage, so rarely displayed by public men, which enables a person to admit that his opinions have undergone a change, and that his mind, more fully informed upon some particular subject, has adopted different ideas regarding it. We had a striking proof of this characteristic the other day, and it was given to us in no unpleasant manner. Mr. Jenkins, moved to indignation by the criminal carelessness which had led to the disaster of Isandlana, and regardless of the certain and vehement opposition of the military element in the House, impulsively thrust himself into the forefront of the attack upon Lord Chelmsford. It was doubtless an error of judgment to arraign the Commander-in-Chief in the fashion adopted by the Member for Dundee. But how free the hon. gentleman was from anything like

bigotry or bitterness, and how ready he was to act generously, was shown a day or two after, when he gave even undue weight to the sad letter written by Lord Chelmsford to the War Office shortly after the Isandlana massacre. Let us do justice to the good qualities as well as to the foibles of a man of very real and marked ability.

Mr. Jenkins may seem to many people to be eccentric and extravagant in his political conduct, and he may often lay himself open to severe censures from those who have more prudence, if they have not more talent or political acumen. But, on the other hand, he is never found advocating unworthy principles, or acting from mean or selfish motives. If, like most men, he believes in himself, he believes also in his fellow-creatures, and is possessed by an ardent desire to benefit them to the utmost of his power. The means he adopts may not al-

ways be the right ones ; but they are always adopted in honesty and sincerity. Moreover, it must never be forgotten that whilst still a young man, and in spite of those disadvantages of which I have spoken, Mr. Jenkins has already done most useful and valuable work as a social reformer and a political critic, and has shown his ability to reach, to control, and to instruct an audience infinitely larger, if not more important than that which sometimes refuses to hear him in the House of Commons. That House, after all, is but the product and the servant of public opinion ; whilst Mr. Jenkins, as a man of letters, may claim to be one of its creators and masters.

Few persons probably know the extent of the labours already performed by Mr. Jenkins in the service of the public. Born at Bangalore in 1838, and educated at the MacGill College, Montreal, he did not be-

come a permanent resident in this country until 1861. In 1869 he wrote 'Ginx's Baby'—the work of the Christmas vacation—and almost immediately afterwards went out to British Guiana on a retainer to act for the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society, before the Commission sent out to examine into the condition of the Coolies. On his return to England, he found that the little satire written before his departure had achieved a remarkable success, having been through six editions in as many months. From this time Mr. Jenkins began to come frequently before the public, and took a prominent part not only in various meetings of the Social Science Congress, but in connection with many important movements for the reform of our political and social institutions. After having unsuccessfully appeared as a candidate before the electors of Stafford and Truro, he contested Dundee in 1873, but

was defeated by Mr. Yeaman. In the following February, however, at the General Election he was returned. His knowledge of colonial questions is very great; his former official connection with the Dominion of Canada and the general bent of his studies having made him the master of most of the problems associated with the government and development of 'England beyond the seas.' Of the depth and reality of his Liberal opinions there is no need to speak. Few men in the House of Commons hold more advanced views than he does; though he has always insisted upon retaining his personal independence—perhaps to a degree unusual even among Radical Members.



MR. CROSS.

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so that whilst he is still in official language Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State, he practically ranks on the same plane with the Secretaries for Foreign Affairs, for War, for India, and for the Colonies. Yet he is the Minister with whom as Englishmen we are brought into most direct and immediate contact; and vast indeed is the concentration of authority under the roof of that Home Office over which he presides.

It would be no easy matter to give a detailed account of all his duties and powers. They extend, however, more or less directly, to all the arrangements for the administration of justice, the maintenance of order, and the regulation of labour throughout the kingdom. It is to him in the long run that most questions affecting local self-government are referred. It is by him that special investigations into accidents, disasters, and crimes are ordered. It is in his hands that

the control not merely of the great penal establishments for convicts, but of all classes of prisons, now rests. He is virtually the chief constable for the metropolis: he appoints all stipendiary magistrates; he authorises the employment of the military, in case of need, for the preservation of public order; he keeps a watchful eye upon the doings of the 'great unpaid,' and he exercises by virtue of his office that prerogative of mercy, which is one of the most ancient and important of the attributes of the Sovereignty.

So amazing a combination of power and responsibility demands on the part of its possessor a corresponding amount of sagacity and discretion. Unfortunately, long experience teaches us that if it be true, as some philosophers aver, that the best of all forms of government is that in which absolute power is wielded by a wise and faultless despot, the world never has discovered and

never will discover such a being. Our Home Secretaries during their tenure of office are very despotic personages. It is true that their despotism is tempered, not like that of Russia by assassination, but by the certainty that it must soon come to an end, and by the constant dread of that terror of all heads of Departments, the Question Hour in the House of Commons: but it is none the less real and absolute within certain limits. Knowing the imperfections of human nature, therefore, we can easily understand how the Home Secretary has seldom been a popular personage. He has so direct a control over matters which affect the personal comfort and welfare of Englishmen, has so much to do with our everyday lives and our common affairs, that his natural proneness to error, the imperfections which he shares with the rest of mankind cannot be long hidden from the popular

gaze. Other Ministers, who have to deal with more remote if not less important matters, with India, or the Colonies, or our Foreign policy, can to a certain extent wrap themselves up in a veil of mystery. It is only on the occasion of great crises, such as those which have come upon us recently, that we scrutinise the action of these men with anything like minuteness. But the Home Secretary has to discharge most of his functions under the constant observation of the British public, and the result is, that his smallest blunders are detected more readily than the most serious errors of his colleagues. It is evident, therefore, that Home Secretaries can seldom or never hope to be popular. The mistakes of other Ministers may involve us in a great war, or may lead to the loss of a colony ; but it is only when they are brought home to us by such an event that we fully realise them. The

errors of a Home Secretary, however, affect the comfort, or the fortunes perhaps of some individual Englishman—perhaps of a whole class. Thus it is that, as a rule, the Home Secretary is the best-abused man in every Government.

It has been the great good fortune of Mr. Cross hitherto to escape the common lot of those who have held the office which he now fills. Yet it must not be supposed that he owes his escape entirely or even chiefly to his own merits. I spoke just now of the many serious crises in foreign and colonial affairs through which the nation is now passing. We have been sailing for the last three or four years in stormy waters, and, naturally enough, our attention has been diverted to a large extent from the conduct of a Minister whose business it is to manage our domestic affairs. When the ship is caught in a tempest, the passengers have

more important matters to look after than the manner in which the steward does his work between decks.

Thus Mr. Cross may congratulate himself, so far as his special Department is concerned, upon the fact that he has escaped not a little of the criticism that has overwhelmed his predecessors, simply because the British public have been absorbed in attending to other business.

Nobody, I imagine, will venture to assert that Mr. Cross, as a statesman, can be placed on a higher level than many previous Home Secretaries who have been excessively unpopular during their term of office. His immediate predecessor, it will be remembered, was Mr. Lowe, between whom and Mr. Cross no comparison is possible. The one is to be ranked among the very ablest, most thoughtful, and most original of Englishmen, whilst the other makes no preten-

sions to intellectual force. Nor can Mr. Cross be said to be the equal of such men as Sir James Graham, Sir George Grey, or Sir George Cornwall Lewis, all of whom had to face much unpopularity whilst they were at the Home Office. Possibly his admirers may think him as good as Mr. Walpole, Mr. Hardy, and Mr. Bruce. It is needless to discuss the point; but supposing it to be admitted, how comes it that Mr. Cross has been so much more lucky than any of those Ministers? He has not even earned that sobriquet which at one time seemed to be the inevitable adornment of the Home Secretary. Whilst 'Weeping Walpole,' 'Hanging Hardy,' and 'Bungling Bruce' still dwell in our memories, no offensive epithet is prefixed to the name of Mr. Cross. Lifted suddenly from obscurity and a seat below the gangway, to the Treasury bench and a position of the highest official

importance, he has unquestionably justified the discernment of his political patron, Lord Beaconsfield, by proving himself to be one of the most popular, if not one of the most successful Home Secretaries of the present reign.

Yet when he entered upon office in 1874 there was much that went against him. In opposition, he had been a somewhat perky and self-satisfied representative of that strange compound of Orange bigotry and political stupidity of which Lancashire Toryism is composed. He had succeeded in wresting from Mr. Gladstone his seat for South-West Lancashire, at the very time when that great statesman's career seemed to have reached its highest point; and this great feat, which Lancashire, let us hope, still views with satisfaction, appeared to have inspired Mr. Cross with the remarkable delusion that he was in some sense not merely the equal but the superior of his defeated

opponent. Self-conceit like this generally brings down upon itself its own punishment, and that of Mr. Cross furnished no exception to the rule.

On the night when Mr. Gladstone, on one of those historic occasions which dwell permanently in the memories of all who have been witnesses of them, introduced his Bill for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, Mr. Cross occupied a prominent seat on the front bench below the gangway to the left of the Speaker. The Prime Minister, in the midst of a silence which showed how earnestly the House was striving to master all the details of the colossal scheme he was unfolding, had reached the point where the appropriation of the surplus funds of the Church was to be explained. Part of those funds were to be allotted for the benefit of the insane, of whom there were, he explained, not a

few in Ireland. As the clear, rich voice of the orator reached this point in his harangue a bitter, sneering laugh broke from the lips of Mr. Cross, rudely breaking the thread of the discourse. Only those who have seen Mr. Gladstone in similar circumstances, can realise the vehemence and indignation with which he turned upon his assailant, or the bitterness of the words, each stinging like a poisoned dart, with which he overwhelmed him. 'I trust,' said he, 'that there is only one honourable gentleman in this House who can see in such a dispensation of Providence as that which deprives a fellow-creature of his reason, a subject for unseemly merriment.' The unhappy gentleman from Lancashire who had provoked this terrific castigation, did not, like Bret Harte's hero, 'curl up on the floor,' but I think it may be said with truth that the 'subsequent proceedings' had

little interest for him—until, indeed, the close of the speech was reached, when Mr. Gladstone, in a few graceful words, tried to ease the pangs which his victim was evidently enduring.

Never again whilst that Parliament was in existence did Mr. Cross offer any provocation to the man whose seat he had gained. Yet when, in the next Parliament, to the surprise of the world, the Member for South-West Lancashire took his place upon the Treasury bench as Home Secretary, he displayed at the outset of his Ministerial career some traces of his old self-sufficiency. Fortunately for him, his first attempt to carry a Bill through the House of Commons was a failure. I say fortunately ; because it was his complete collapse whilst in charge of the Licensing Act Amendment Bill, that revealed to him the extent of his own powers, and induced him to adopt that safe

and simple policy which he has since followed so successfully.

Satisfied that he had not the power needed to enable him to command the House, Mr. Cross resolved to conciliate it; and this course he has since consistently pursued. His experience as Chairman of Quarter Sessions in Lancashire had given him a practical acquaintance with the special duties of the Department he had to administer, which was simply invaluable. No statesman, in the wider sense of the word, and without any pretensions to those gifts of oratory which are valued so highly in the House of Commons, he has evidently a large fund of common sense, as well as a practical acquaintance with those affairs of police, highways, and our parochial system generally, which the Home Secretary must know thoroughly, if he is not to bungle and fail. But even those qualifications would

not have secured for Mr. Cross the success he now enjoys, if it had not been for that profound respect for public opinion which he acquired during his earliest efforts as a Minister.

I suppose no member of the present Government is more anxious than he is to swim with the tide: Permissive legislation is his panacea for all the ills that England is heir to, and if he can transfer to a Select Committee the responsibility of deciding upon the principles on which this permissive legislation is to be applied in any given case, his happiness is made complete. Somebody once remarked that his attitude towards the House resembled that of the shopkeeper towards his customer :—‘ Pray, gentlemen, tell me what you require, and I shall be delighted to furnish you with it.’ This may not be a very dignified or statesmanlike way of playing the part of a great Minister; but it is

not an unprofitable one—as the case of Mr. Cross proves. Sensitive to criticism, with a keen eye to the maintenance of his own popularity, and a large degree of freedom from awkward prejudices or principles (so far, at least, as his official duties are concerned), he is admirably suited for the post he fills. True, he occasionally astonishes the world by displaying that leaning towards centralisation which is the distinguishing characteristic of all Home Secretaries; but he speedily neutralises the effect of the exhibition by his willingness to accept correction and to conciliate his critics and opponents. Englishmen, it is clear, do not care to have a great statesman at the Home Office. What they want is a man of good business aptitudes, of clear judgment, and of no very pronounced views regarding questions of administration; a man, too, who is enough of a Philistine to understand

and sympathise with the characteristic weaknesses and prejudices of his fellow-countrymen. Such a man we seem to have in Mr. Cross, who, as Home Secretary, may be truthfully described as being that rarest of all phenomena in this disjointed world—a round peg in a round hole.



